Vol 2
No. 2

DANGEROUS TEENS

$2

Scenario

THE MAGAZINE OF SCREENWRITING ART

COMPLETE SCREENPLAYS:

ELECTION
By Alexander Payne & Jim Taylor

REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE
By Stewart Stern

THE BIRDS
By Evan Hunter

PLUS:

Interviews with the Screenwriters

Molly Haskell on Teen Flicks

Donald Spoto on Hitchcock

Philip Glass Scores

Short Film Scripts

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Miramax Films salutes this extraordinary group of screenwriters and congratulates them on their outstanding achievements in 1999.

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- Francis Ford Coppola

(As for the bad ones, well, at least they're short.)

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ALL STORY

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THE MAGAZINE OF SCREENWRITING ART

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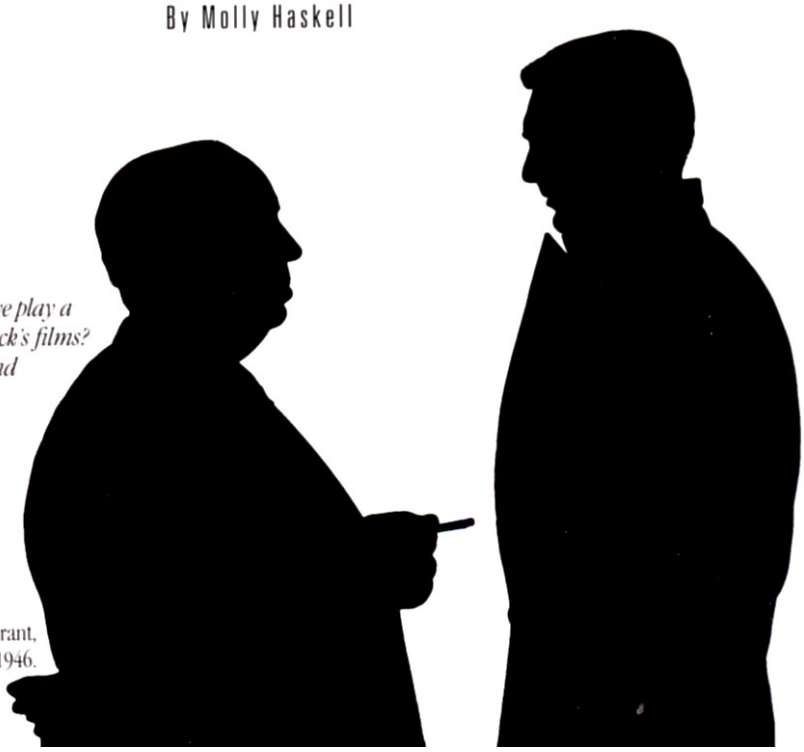

Alfred Hitchcock and Cary Grant, *Notorious*, RKO, 1946.

Photo courtesy Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Library

EDITOR'S NOTE

When *Rebel Without a Cause* opened to healthy numbers in 1955, press articles at the time asked: is there such a thing as a "juvenile box office?" Today, no one would be foolish enough to pose that question. Teenagers now command the largest ticket-buying slice of the movie market pie, and movies for and about teenagers proliferate. The hungered-after billion-dollar market is in the hands and whims of a groundswell of under-20-somethings. And as Molly Haskell points out in "Teen Power," this issue's keynote essay on teen flicks: "What repels Daddy and shocks Mommy still drives the motor of the teen film and its audience."

This issue, *Scenario* publishes Stewart Stern's screenplay for *Rebel Without a Cause*, a pivotal teen film classic. *Rebel* was one of the first films told from the point of view of the teenager, the audience it was intended for. The images in the film are iconic—teenagers staring at a planetarium's celestial sky, contemplating cosmic questions; teens speeding to the edge of a precipice; three teens huddled in a decayed, abandoned mansion, recreating a touching little half-life of a "nuclear family." *Rebel* was one of the first films to suggest that the troubled lives and delinquency of American teenagers were not exclusive to poor rural or ghetto families, but were conditions also to be found in upscale suburbia. The death of James Dean, the film's star, brought a tragic edge to the film's message.

The critical press and reviews surrounding the release of *Rebel* could be torn from today's newspapers—was the film too excessively violent? Would teenage moviegoers copycat the violence? Bosley Crowther, writing about *Rebel* in 1955 in *The New York Times*, said: "We continue to insist that producers be more careful and responsible in what they say. To paraphrase an old axiom, little egos have big eyes." In hindsight, the knife fight in *Rebel* that was the target of these discussions seems more balletic than brutal. The real violence in the film was, in fact, generational—the emotional violence within families. The rebellious young in *Rebel* were damaged goods from damaged families, a far cry from the all-empowered, cellphone-packing superteens that populate today's mainstream movies and TV shows, teenagers who seem not so much born out of families as launched fully-formed and perched for world domination.

This issue, *Scenario* also presents the screenplay of *Election*, by Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor, in which the shenanigans surrounding a high school election for class president illuminate all sorts of rancid behavior that's come to be known as "adult." *Election* also introduces a new teen icon, Tracy Flick, who magnifies the dimensions of the word "ambition," and with it, the "American way." With success clenched in her vise-grip jaw, born-to-win Tracy Flick bulldozes her way through the American High School, scattering the mere bowling pins that are her classmates and teachers. *Election*, Payne and Taylor's comedic adaptation of Tom Perrotta's novel of the same name, is an adult film that takes place in a high school, and, in a sense, skews such separatist definitions as "adult" and "teen."

Federico Fellini described *The Birds* as an "apocalyptic poem," and Camille Paglia praised the film as "a perverse ode to woman's sexual glamour." Screenwriter Evan Hunter's initial conception of the film was that of a romantic, screwball comedy, one in which the audience would be teased into relaxed laughter by the early comic scenes, and then shocked by machine-gunning bird attacks. This alternating one-two punch combination of laughter and terror would create, according to Hunter, "a sort of nervous laughter that would lead to further screaming even if we photographed an innocent feather duster." *Scenario* is proud to present Hunter's preferred-version script for *The Birds* in this, Alfred Hitchcock's centennial year. The screenplay elegantly reveals not only the film that was made from it, but the film Hunter intended. Hitchcock scholar Donald Spoto has written a new essay for the occasion, "Love, Dreams & Hitchcock," which poses the provocative notion that even the most grisly of relationships in a Hitchcock film can be seen, through a certain lens, as love stories.

Both short film scripts this issue depict the strange machismo proving rituals of the male of the species—on a city construction site, in Joe Hamersky's delightful *Gofer*, and on a rural farm in Michael Burke's haunting *Fish Belly White*. Hamersky's film won the top honor at Columbia University, Best Film of 1998, and Burke's earned the Special Jury Prize at Sundance 1999.

As part of *Scenario*'s continuing series of POVs, Michael Rohatyn takes a look at the film scores of composer Philip Glass. Glass feels that the music in a film, an integral part of the story, should be considered earlier in the process than is now the case. As Glass puts it: "The only way to work is to work with the scenario before the film is shot." In another POV this issue, Millard Kaufman turns a sharp eye on the protesters who populated the picket line outside the 1998 Oscars, where the disgruntled gathered to rally against giving an award to Elia Kazan, gifted film director and HUAC informer, as if each definition somehow denied the other.—*Annie Nocenti*

Scenario

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Kent Williams

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Cover: *Wendy Wray & Peter Kuper*

THIS ISSUE'S ILLUSTRATORS

WENDY WRAY's career as an illustrator began when she won a fifty-dollar prize in a small-town art show. Originally from Maryland, Wray, who illustrated *Rebel Without a Cause*, has lived in New York, Paris, Virginia and Vermont; she currently splits her time between Denver and Key West. Her illustrations have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*. She has also illustrated several books.

PETER KUPER, illustrator of *Election*, has done illustration assignments for *Time*, *Mother Jones* and *The New York Times*, among other publications. His comic strip "New York Minute" appears in the Sunday opinion section of the *New York Daily News*. He has written and illustrated numerous books and comics including *Stripped: An Unauthorized Autobiography*, which is in development as an animated show. His most recent project is a CD-ROM based on his book *ComicsTrip*, chronicling an eight-month trip through Africa and Southeast Asia.

Illustrator of *The Birds*, **KENT WILLIAMS** is a draftsman, painter, illustrator and comics creator. He received his BFA in drawing and painting from Pratt Institute. Williams' work has been seen in numerous publications including *Playboy* and *Omni*, and he is the recipient of many awards. He currently exhibits at the Merry Karnowsky Gallery in Los Angeles and the Gomez Gallery in Baltimore. Williams lives in Chapel Hill, NC, with is wife and two sons. He is represented by Allen Spiegel Fine Arts.

Illustrator of this issue's *Short Subjects*, **DAVID HOLLENBACH** received his BFA from Pratt Institute in 1998. His client list includes *The New York Times Book Review* and *Forbes*.

DAVID JOHNSON, who did the portraits of Evan Hunter, Stewart Stern, Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor, has been published in *Time*, *Business Week*, *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times Book Review* and *Sports Illustrated*, among other publications. He currently lives in New Canaan, CT.

P.O.V. 1

BY MILLARD KAUFMAN
PICKET LINE: A VIEW FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET

He stood on stage, that night, like a bewildered stranger on the downward slope of his fragile senescence, as if the old wrecking ball had finally caught up with him.

A few hours earlier, outside the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion where the 1998 Oscars were to be bestowed, about 750 people (my estimate; *The New York Times* reported 200, the *Los Angeles Times*, 500) had gathered on First Street to damn and dishonor Elia Kazan for shooting off his mouth forty-seven years ago.

Like the man they despised, most of the demonstrators were elderly. Many of them wobbled as they walked, but they were sound of voice and strong of spirit and in their unforgiving anger were far from fragile. Still, they could barely navigate, so tight were they packed, shoulder to shoulder, in the thick energizing gruel of protest, which seemed, if anything, to intensify their determination.

Placards and bullhorns proclaimed their outrage, their refusal to acquiesce in silence to McCarthy's dementia and Kazan's compliance in it, even after the passage of half a century. "DON'T WHITEWASH THE BLACKLIST" the posters admonished. And like the repetitive boom of a kettledrum, "DON'T STAND FOR KAZAN."

The pickets were paragons of politeness, excessively well-behaved, a credit to their species, and at all times aware of what got them galumphing back into the breech, into the downtown sunbroil, forsaking the backyard barbecue and a leisurely go at the Sunday papers. They turned out, some with aluminum-tube walkers and grandchildren, a few of the least nimble in wheelchairs, to remind the vast televiewing world that Kazan was a major and an unforgotten force who deprived people of their livelihood and in the same fell swoop aided and abetted the un-American Activities Committee. That eminent body was aptly named, they concurred, engaged as it was in destroying the First and Fifth Amendments to the Constitution.

They agreed that Kazan had talent to a rare and blessed degree, but that talent, regardless of its glitter, was neither a substitute for character nor an excuse for snitching.

"It's not only what he did," an iron-eyed, white-haired yenta said, "but what he didn't do. He had a chance, a man of his clout, to stand up against those fascist bastards. He could have stopped the whole damned mess, stopped it cold, and he blew it."

A man with skin like weathered parchment softly told a friend, "This is probably my last picket line." "Don't jump to conclusions," his friend cautioned, "you never know—every five minutes for the last fifty years there's been something to picket about. Maybe," he added brightly, "something will turn up tomorrow."

Gestures of support—small, perhaps, but endearing—came from unexpected sources. A local radio reporter offered a throat lozenge to a hoarse instrumentalist on the bullhorn. The smoky back window of a passing limo ghosted open and an elegant, anorexic arm emerged flashing two fingers in a bejeweled V-for-Victory salute. It was a lovely alabaster arm, totally naked. That was all any of us saw but it was sufficient to evoke rescue fantasies in every man on the sidewalk under ninety. Their eyes followed the receding Lincoln as they continued to shuttle back and forth with their slogans and their shouting.

There were other voices and other placards raised by anti-anti-Kazan supporters. There were firebrands of numerous causes and creeds—this house had many mansions. Dissidents milled about, swelling, receding, surging again.

Various factions on Hill Street clotted in vociferous isolation, each group steering clear of all others as if quarantined with some deadly but superior virus they had no intention of sharing.

There was the assemblage dedicated to "END SMUT IN MOVIES." There was a ferocious company of disciples espousing the elitist philosophy of Ayn Rand, pointing out that things were a bit twisted, that it was the Reds who should apologize to Kazan. There was a slope-shouldered chunk of gristle, as silent and as large as a monadnock, packed into a T-shirt billboarding the Jewish Defense League.

There was at the same time an ecumenical intermingling of bannered Communists (an American party and an International party), Trotskyites, Socialists with an attendant splinter representing the Socialist Workers Party, and Nicaraguans and Salvadorans protesting the U.S. State Department's policy in their respective countries.

Another entity was much in evidence. The Los Angeles Police Department, reinforced by a covey of hovering helicopters, was immaculate, immoderately unflappable and infinitely courteous not only to the tourists on Temple Street, but to the diverse party and organizational representatives. Two helpful young women cops were stunningly beautiful and bilingual as well. The tourists in their fiercely colored regimentals—sports shirts, shorts and sandals—looked for the most part like aliens on sabbatical in Palm Springs. They stared hard at each other behind their requisite dark gigs, unrelenting in their pursuit of celebrities, while being themselves pursued by hawkers of souvenirs commemorating the final Academy celebration of the century. It closed, as regards Kazan, on a manic note of indecision.

But why all this brouhaha in the first place? Possibly in the eyes of many observers, and on a subcutaneous level in others, Kazan emerged as the quintessential informer who legitimized the blacklist and, in doing so, was instrumental in changing the course of American film. Because, I believe, a correlation existed between the enforcement of the blacklist and the fifty years of witless on-screen sex and violence which followed, as humanism packed its bag and went quietly into the night. Many young and talented screenwriters feared the return of the bad old days. They had no desire whatsoever to explore the prickly thicket of ideas when, who knows, it might land them before a reborn star-chambered committee somewhere back in the future.

Millard Kaufman is a longtime screenwriter whose credits include the Oscar-nominated Bad Day at Black Rock *(1955). His new book,* Plots and Characters *(Really Great Books), is about screenwriting.*

PHILIP GLASS: METHOD MAN

BY MICHAEL ROHATYN

It is a matter of conventional wisdom that music comes just about last in the sequence of elements that constitute a movie. Often the composer is not even hired until the editing process is well under way, which may be months after the film is shot, leaving him or her little more to do than to decorate what has already been built.

Philip Glass is vexed by this state of affairs. He is arguably the most distinguished American composer of his generation, with a "credits list" that includes monumental works in opera, theater and dance, as well as for ensemble and orchestra, and a reputation that extends far beyond New York, where he resides, and Los Angeles, where movies rule. And he doesn't like being last.

"Music should arrive at the editor's table at the same time as the images do," says Glass. "If the images and music arrive together, there's a chance for an organic relationship to come about. If the film is edited before the music, that will never happen. The industry way of working is to shoot the film, then add the music on afterwards, and what you get is a mess. You get formulaic writing."

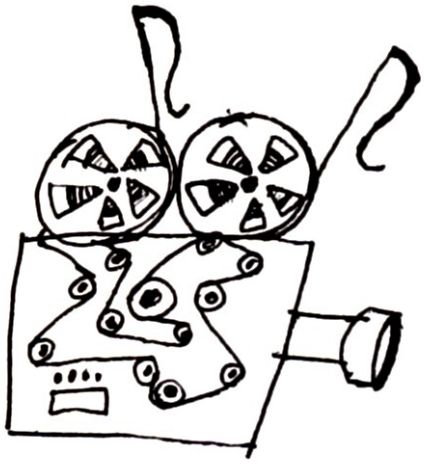


Illustration: Scott Menchin

Glass is also quick to note, "I'm not a film composer. I'm a composer who writes for film now and then." But the results have been extraordinary, and the films he has worked on form a remarkably diverse and distinguished group, including *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998), *Kundun* (Martin Scorsese, 1997), *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* (Paul Schrader, 1985), *The Thin Blue Line* (Errol Morris, 1988), *Koyaanisqatsi* (Godfrey Reggio, 1983), and most recently, this year's re-issue of *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931), for which Glass composed an entirely new score.

Not wanting the music left for last, Glass turns to what came first—the script. "From my point of view, the only way to work is to work with the scenario before the film is shot. In most cases, I have succeeded in having such an arrangement—with Paul Schrader, Errol Morris, and Martin Scorsese, I was able to do that.

"So based on the scenario, I begin to write the music. Now, this is not that different from the way I write an opera. When I write an opera, I get a libretto—a scenario and a libretto, they look the same—it describes the scene, there's character, there's dialogue. So for an opera composer, this is a very normal way of working. At this point I'm on my own. The director is worrying about his locations, he's thinking about his second units, he's going crazy with the actors, he's not even thinking about music. *I'm* thinking about the music."

The thinking involved goes much deeper than musical concerns such as melody and tempo, which for the moment are not yet in play. The composer's energies are being focused at a profound level of abstraction and intuition.

"There's a complex strategy that has to do with the relationship of the music to the 'story/image.' Some images are very far from the music, some images are very close to the music, sometimes the music is right on top of the image. And the composer has a lot of room to maneuver. The director will rarely tell him what to do. First of all, they don't even think of it that completely. They don't see that it is, in fact, a *strategy*. These are decisions and choices that you make before you write the music. It's not something that happens to you in a dream. God didn't tell you to write it that way. What I mean by strategy is—a considered approach to a problem. When we say, 'it's rational,' let me say, this is where the art is. This is where you function at a high level of artistic sensibility."

Elaborating on this concept of strategy, Glass offers an example: "You have an 'image/story' and you have a piece of music and the question is, how do they go together? Sometimes the answer is: they don't. At the beginning of *Powaqqatsi* (Godfrey Reggio, 1988), when the guys are in the Serra Pelada mine pit digging the gold, the music you hear is tremendously upbeat. No one expected that music. The producer said to me, 'I didn't think it would be like this.' And I said, 'Did you really think it was going to be *(sings a chain-gang dirge)* Yo, yo, heave, ho . . .? Did you think that I was going to write that?' He kind of turned red and walked away. What I did was something so unexpected that it made you look at the activity in a very different way."

A similar strategy of contrast was brought to bear on the opening sequence of *The Thin Blue Line*. "There was an image at the beginning, the skyline of Dallas, and I used a very dreamy piece of music. If you'll remember, it's an image which almost seems to dislocate you, you've no idea, almost, whether you're awake or asleep. It's kind of a tentative image. And then the voice of Randall Adams says, 'My mother said to me, if ever there was a hell on earth, it's Dallas.' And what you see is that image and this music. The combination of the words, the image, the music, becomes truly bizarre. From that moment, you know you're in for a very strange journey."

With *Kundun*, the problem was the opposite—how to ground the film in its proper setting, in this case a truly exotic one, while at the same time reassuring the audience that what they are seeing is not a fantasy, not bizarre, but real. "There was a filmic concern

with Marty [Scorsese] about creating an authentic feeling of location, since we weren't allowed into Tibet. So I felt that one of the requirements of the music was that it provide a sense of place. The music had two functions—one was to create a sense of place for the movie, and the other was to be a doorway for a Western audience to enter a very exotic culture. I said, 'These are the two missions of the music.' Most Americans have never seen anything like a Tibetan nobleman in full regalia riding a horse, it's right out of the Middle Ages. So there was a gap that had to be crossed."

Once these strategic decisions have been made, the music is composed and then recorded as a "work tape," which will be given to the editors to use as they begin to cut the film together. It won't necessarily be perfect. Timings will be off, cues running too long or too short, transitions will need adjustment. But the music can at least begin to meld with and inform the images and scenes that are being assembled.

Equally important, the "work tape" will preclude the editors or director from using temporary music while they wait for the final score. This temporary music, a provisional score or "temp track," is usually borrowed from a wide variety of sources, such as pop and classical CD's, and even other film scores. It has an insidious way of imprinting itself on everything: the images, the cuts, and especially the director's sensibility. It's been playing over and over again during the editing process, and it is not uncommon for the director to prefer it to the finished score. For Glass, preempting the temp track is a crucial battle to have won. "Once they've started working with temp tracks, it's a lost cause, from the point of view of the composer."

Ironically, Glass's music is a favorite of editors and directors everywhere. So if you've heard traces of Glass in film scores in which he had no part, it may well be that the composer was following a temp track made up of recycled Glass cues.

Mindful of the tendency of directors to favor their temp tracks, Glass makes his preemptive work tape as polished as possible. He uses real instruments instead of synthesizers whenever possible, and records in highest fidelity. "Of course, this is more expensive than the other way of working, it's more time-consuming. Basically, I have to write the score at least twice."

And sometimes more. "Errol Morris is also a composer, he was a musician in his younger years. With *A Brief History of Time*, he sent me back eight or ten times to rewrite [the music in] a scene, because it wasn't exactly what he wanted. He said, give me something else, give me something else, give me something else, give me something else. On the other hand, he never handed me a tape and said, it has to sound like this. If I'm given a temp track, then I'm inside that [composer's] head, and who the hell wants to be there?"

Glass's "work tapes" have made themselves indispensable in unexpected ways, producing collaborative opportunities that clearly gave the composer great satisfaction. "On one occasion, with *Powaqqatsi*, when the cameraman went to the Serra Pelada mines in Brazil, he went with a cassette of the music that would eventually be the edited music. He had a little Walkman, he had the music on, and he was filming while he was listening to the music!"

While Glass insists on being meaningfully included in the filmmaking process, it is a reciprocal relationship. He is diligent about making himself available to other elements of the production, that they might in turn inform his work. "I try and go to the shoot. I managed to do that with *Mishima*, with *Truman Show*. I almost always go to the set and meet the actors.

"On *Mishima*, I saw the models of the set in the same way that, when I work in an opera house, the designer will show me a model of the set. People are happy to have you there, and it's so unusual for a composer to even want to do any of this, that they kind of like it. It's a very considered and collaborative and thorough way of working. Basically, I'm taking the work seriously."

And what if a film calls specifically for a score made up of borrowed music—in other words, a temp track of the insidious variety, the kind Glass has fought so hard to circumvent? Such a question occurred in the making of *The Truman Show*. As a satire of, among other things, the packaging of filmed drama for mass consumption, the film follows a man as he comes to realize that he has been, his entire life, the unwitting star of a mega-TV production. Christof (Ed Harris), the mastermind director of the show within the movie, needs music. What does he use? As icing for an escalating pile of ironies in the film, *The Truman Show*'s director, Peter Weir, decided that Christof would simply borrow a cue from Glass's *Mishima* score. It's the sort of transposition which might have awakened Glass's well-hewn antipathies on the subject, except that Weir was able to argue the choice with great finesse—an argument the composer recounts with glee.

"Did you see *The Truman Show*? Peter's a very clever guy. He said, 'The character Christof is the supreme control freak of all time, and it is Christof who is picking the music, not me!' Can you believe that? He said, 'I am just following what Christof would have done, and if Christof was making this movie, he would have done it this way!'" As for why, specifically, Christof would have lifted the *Mishima* cue, Glass recounts, "I said, 'Well, how come you're using that?' and Peter said, 'Because Christof is the kind of guy who has a collection of tapes in his car, and in the collection is *Mishima*, and that's what he would have done. Christof takes that CD, he slaps it right on, and there it is.' I had to agree! Basically, Peter sets the stage for his own work in such a way that it's pointless to argue with him. You're talking about a man who's spent his life in film, who's done a number of masterpieces, same as with Marty. I mean, you don't argue with these guys! I'm going to tell him how to make a movie? Get out of here!"

While he was evidently well persuaded by Weir's reasoning, in general, Glass concedes that the composer has only limited leverage when it comes to fighting for or against a cue. "Finally, to be blunt, the film belongs to the filmmaker, this is the hierarchy, this is the power structure that exits. To go in there to try and change it is insanity, and you'll just upset yourself and stress out. You won't succeed." The indefatigable collaborator has, however, one trick left. He insists on retaining control of the music when it is released on the soundtrack album, thus joining them at their own game. "I say, 'Fine with me, but the record's mine.'"

Michael Robatyn is a writer and composer whose film scores include Angela *and* The Delta.

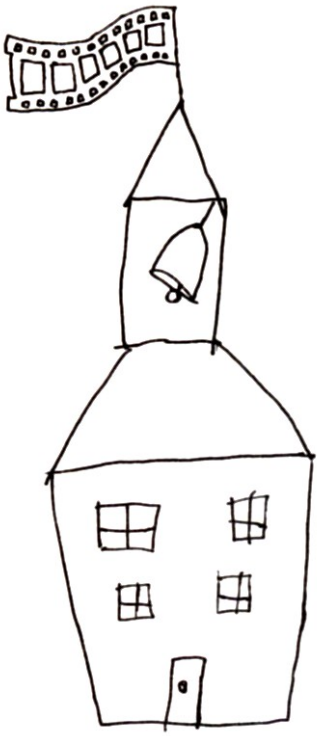
KEYNOTE ESSAY

TEEN POWER

BY MOLLY HASKELL

The aching vulnerability of the parentally challenged trio in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) occasionally peeks through today's high school pictures, but the tone and landscape have radically changed in the last 45 years, as if the gangster film had mutated into musical comedy. Somewhere in the '70s—maybe with *Carrie* (1976)—the worm turned. The wail of pain from those who didn't fit in has been converted into a blast of bravado as kids take over the world, and the high school itself has become an all-embracing metaphor for life.

In a commencement address at Vassar College, Meryl Streep is reported to have told the graduating class, "The world you're about to enter won't be like college. It'll be like high school." And indeed, as life has become more childish, more greedily unrestrained and more blithely contemptuous of boundaries, high school has become a surrogate society, a place where the young jostle for position in a pecking order more rigid than the court of Louis XIV.



Parents, still crucial figures in *Rebel*, have been banished to the outer rim. The inner circle is occupied by the jocks and the beauty queens until they are co-opted or destroyed by pimple power, and the nerds, as in the real world of whiz-kid tycoons and Internet start-up execs, have the last laugh.

Some of the new mythology has to do with the fact that the outsiders have gained the ascendancy, not just the computer whizzes but the ex-geeks, now screenwriters and directors, who are telling the story and getting their revenge. There was also the turning of the tables in the '70s, signaled by movies like *Grease* (1978), in which the ethnics and bikers who used to be *déclassé* were suddenly the sex symbols, while the all-American whitebreads with letter sweaters were jokes.

But the current success and ubiquitousness of the teen film, at least one in every multiplex from mall to shining mall, signals the emergence and economic "empowerment" of teenagers as a vast country within a country—one that *Rebel* helped to announce and define—to be targeted and exploited.

Rebel, pre-blockbuster and pre-ironic, had a lyrical intensity no other film has matched since. With its underlying Salinger-esque credo (adults are hypocrites and phonies), it appeared on the horizon like a flash in the sky, illuminating the teenage soul. There was the magical cast of James Dean, Natalie Wood and Sal Mineo, huddled together for the warmth unavailable at home, their isolation rendered visually expressive in Nicholas Ray's brooding wide-screen compositions.

Yet in the widening and expanding of the teenage turf, the genre it spawned has proved capacious, allowing for many mixes and hybrids, separately and in combination: the horror film (*Carrie*, *Heathers*, 1989), the ensemble coming-of-age film (*American Graffiti*, 1973, *Stand by Me*, 1986), the deflowering comedy (*Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, 1982, *American Pie*, 1999), musicals (*Grease*), satire (*Clueless*, 1997, *Election*, 1999), the grotesque (*Welcome to the Dollhouse*, 1996) and of course, and invariably, the grossout. Though vulgar, tasteless, offensive all became words of praise to the intended audience, the liberal use of obscenities led to the ultimate irony and what became the oxymoronic and often moronic staple of the genre, the R-rated teen comedy, prohibited (in theory, anyway) to the very age group whose antics were being portrayed on the screen—antics no adult in his right mind would pay to see.

My own hunch is that it was because of the arrested development of adults of the '70s, a whole generation who refused to behave like grown-ups, who dressed and acted like kids, that pushed the young to seek out a strategy of extreme humor where their parents wouldn't follow. Hence *Animal House* (1978) and *Porky's* (1981) function below the bar of hipness and beyond the pale.

Even in the crudest of these films, movies made not only for but seemingly by adolescents, one senses just beyond the playground a turbulent world in which the social fallout creates unusual pressures on the young. Implicit are seismic changes of the last 50 years: widespread divorce, the breakup and reconstitution of families, sexual freedom, feminism, the Vietnam War and its aftermath. The high school, the one staple of a life in which families break up or move from one community to another, takes on importance because of the collapse of power of other institutions like church and neighborhood that imposed boundaries and defined identity. Thus the hierarchies in which jocks and cheerleaders arrogantly reign not only provide a convenient, dominant, parent-like class against whom to rebel, but a comfortingly predictable microcosm of categories and classifications.

Sex is always and ever and in myriad forms the major issue, bravado and obscenities just another bid for ascendancy in the teetering balance of power. If the majority of teen movies cater to the male perspective, with the holy grail, Guys Getting Laid,

Illustration: Scott Menchin

accomplished with a maximum of yucks and a minimum of humiliation (for them), the best offer a broader perspective. Countering male bragadoccio and Master of the Universe fantasies are those rare movies which give female subjectivity its due, allowing them something like equal time in the opening rounds of the battle of the sexes.

Of course, it's only the official opening round: much turmoil, consciously or unconsciously, will have already occurred, as Freud has told us, and subsequent attractions will live in the shadow of early history. The Oedipal drama going awry. Parents looking to children to fill the void of a failed marriage.

Although the primary adult figures in *Rebel* are Dean's fatuous parents and Sal Mineo's absent ones, the subordinate triangle involving Natalie Wood strikes us with the powerful force of the unspoken. Walking the streets alone in a red coat, she has been brought into the police station by a kindly cop who asks her if she's looking for company or just lost. The implication of neediness, confused sexuality and yearning are all reflected in the disappointment she registers when, contrary to her request, her mother instead of her father comes to pick her up. Later we see the father, in a reflexive recoil from his own suppressed desire, shrink from kissing her. He hugs his son but, unable to deal with his feelings for his daughter, he simply pushes her away. Adults turn from children rather than coming to grips with them as human beings, see them as extensions of themselves or use them to plug the gaps in their own emotional lives. In the reports on the families of the killers in the Littleton massacre, one has to wonder about Klebold senior saying his son Dylan was his "best friend," as if that's a gift to a child rather than a burden.

For a young woman, having Dad as best friend, i.e., winning the Oedipal battle, can be a triumph with secret perils. In *Clueless* (1997), a charming update of Jane Austen's *Emma*, the heroine, deliciously played by Alicia Silverstone, has her father all to herself. The doting and rich Beverly Hills widower gives her the emotional and financial wherewithal to stand tall and alone, but absurdly spoiled and petted, she ends up exercising her frustrated talents in matchmaking among her friends. A charming bully, she is finally "taught" love and humility by a studious stepbrother. The handsome mentor is the ultimate romantic father figure for the independent woman in Austen's world, brought magically up-to-date by Amy Heckerling.

Heckerling also directed *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, that film about rites of passage which has itself become a rite of passage for each generation of teenagers. The movie was adapted from the book by Cameron Crowe, who went back to high school to see how the gang was doing a decade after he'd left—an impulse dramatized recently in Drew Barrymore's reportorial reliving of the experience in *Never Been Kissed* (1999). Well-acted by Sean Penn, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Judge Reinhold and Phoebe Cates, *Ridgemont High* became memorable also for providing insight into the girl's point of view, the anguish and letdown after the supposedly glorious "first time."

American Pie, a recent film directed by Chris and Paul Weitz, is a boys-get-laid story that pointedly offers a less benign and more troubled account of sexual "awakening" than is supplied by most teen movies. While a virtual compendium of grossout staples—masturbation and other bodily fluid jokes that go beyond *There's Something About Mary* (1998)—the characters are never degraded, and the girls are allowed their own lively sexual curiosity. A sense of moral equilibrium prevails in the give and take and highs and lows in the voyage of mutual discovery.

Of all the recent teen comedies, Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor's *Election* has dazzled a good many of us who'd sworn off teen movies with its mordantly witty script and hilarious sendup of familiar high school types. The dark comedy does this with an originality that shows how open to endless variation even the most seemingly tired genre can be. Reese Witherspoon's Tracy Flick will enter the lexicon as the quintessential overachiever—a female version of Jason Schwartzman's student hustler in *Rushmore* (1998), only where the latter fails in school and succeeds as an extracurricular entrepreneur, Tracy is Miss Everything: a hotshot student, always the first to raise her hand in class, as well as an indefatigable campaigner for president of the student body. A bright, pretty and perky juggernaut, she's a pain in the ass, yet she's ultimately more sympathetic than her self-righteous opponent, Matthew Broderick's homeroom teacher, whose petty schemes are at odds with his self-evaluation as one of superior wisdom. As Tracy battles teachers and fellow students, *Election* challenges the straight generational tensions of high school movies with a new sophistication. High schools aren't monolithic, there are cliques, teacher-student hostilities (and affairs), and different points of view, here reflected in the sweet, well-meaning but maddening boy Broderick pushes to oppose Tracy, and the boy's lesbian sister, a wonderful character, who briefly captivates the student body by exposing the absurdities of student government and its ridiculous machinery.

For Tracy, daughter of a single mother, sex has been sublimated into the energy of striving. When she's seduced by a teacher, promoting himself as her mentor, she has an affair, but he's the sleazy one. She's drawn like a heat-guided missile to success not sex: she and her mother dump him when they realize he's a loser.

We're a long way here from the pandering of a lot of teen movies, the self-gratifying scenarios of victimization or easy conquests that paper over the anguish of growing up. For filmmakers journeying backward in time, there are conflicting forces at work: the tension between the now-obligatory grossness of the teenflick and the backlash against it; the liberating effects of bathroom humor in a p.c. environment versus the puritanical,

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Molly Haskell's books include From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies *(1974),* Love and Other Infectious Diseases, A Memoir *(1992), and* Holding My Own In No Man's Land: Women and Men and Film and Feminists *(1997). A past member of the New York Film Critics Circle and the National Society of Film Critics, Haskell has been a staff film critic for* The Village Voice, New York *and* Vogue. *Her articles and essays have appeared in a number of publications, including* The New York Times, Esquire, The Nation, Film Comment *and* Mirabella. *She has taught at both Barnard College and Columbia University. Haskell lives in New York City with her husband, Andrew Sarris.*

REBEL
Without a Cause

Screenplay by **STEWART STERN**

Illustrated by **WENDY WRAY**

FADE IN:
A DEEP NIGHT SKY – MATTE SHOT
CAMERA SEARCHES slowly upward through the heavens and the silver tone of a bell is HEARD sounding the strokes of midnight.

On the final note of the bell, CAMERA is full on the Milky Way and there it rests, just long enough for a burst of Christmas singing to arise. The carol is sung by the crude, unmatched voices of children. CAMERA PANS DOWN TO INCLUDE:

SPIRE OF A CHURCH
CAMERA continues its DOWNWARD PAN and we pass a window behind which is the source of the singing. CAMERA PANS OFF WINDOW TO SHOW –

LONG SHOT – CITY – NIGHT
Suddenly revealed – crisp and sparkling with lights and framed by a lighted Christmas tree. CAMERA PANS DOWN AND OVER:

A LONELY STREET FULL OF PARKED CARS
The singing diminishes but a thread of it remains. A car has just parked. The headlights snap off. A MAN emerges whistling the same Christmas melody and pulls some gifts from the front seat. He slams the door and starts down the street in the direction of a house with bright windows. He must pass an empty lot full of rusty grass and litter which lies in darkness between two streetlights.

As the Man walks by the lot, still whistling, a GROUP OF FIGURES rises silently from the grass, figures who have been lying in concealment until now. They step noiselessly onto the pavement and follow the Man. At the sound of their boots the whistling stops. The Man glances behind him and sees the figures walking after him, filling the pavement. A streetlight shows them to be boys and girls and all quite young. The Man moves on more swiftly and the sound of their pursuit increases. He begins to run TOWARD the lighted house and the following footsteps run too. Suddenly he stops under the next streetlight and turns to face the figures. They are upon him and around him quickly. Nobody speaks for a moment, then one of the boys grins. His name is BUZZ. He is big and filled with an awareness of his own masculinity.

BUZZ *(Friendly, cool)* That was pretty what you were whistling. Whistle some more.

The Man whistles a nervous phrase, trying to make a joke of the situation which he doesn't understand.

BUZZ *(Suddenly)* You got a cigarette?

MAN Oh, I think so—

The Man fumbles in his pocket, finds a pack and drops it in his nervousness. The figures wait until he picks it up. He offers one to Buzz.

MAN Filter tips.

BUZZ *(Smiling—encouraging)* You smoke it. Smoke it, Dad.

Smiling uncertainly, the Man puts the cigarette in his mouth. Buzz, still smiling, takes out a packet of wooden matches.

BUZZ I'll light it for you, Dad.

Buzz ignites a match and holds it near the Man's face for a second, searching it. Then he lights the whole box under his nose. The Man shrieks, and his packages fall. Buzz slaps him sharply, his smile gone.

MAN *(Shrieking)* It's Christmas!

The CAMERA PANS AWAY as the figures enclose him, and HOLDS on a small mechanical monkey which has dropped from its wrappings. It begins to dance madly on the pavement, then runs down.

CHOIR
We are not daily beggars
Who beg from door to door—
But we are neighbor's children
Whom you have seen before!
Love and joy come to you
And to you your wassail, too—
And God bless you and send you
A Happy New Year—
Oh, God send you a Happy New Year.

The feet of the figures scatter past the unmoving monkey. Then CAMERA RISES to SHOW that the Man has disappeared. There is a moment of awful stillness, then we see a boy coming down the street alone. He is quite drunk, and he slips once. This is JIM, a good-looking kid of seventeen with a crew-cut and wearing a good suit. The spilled packages on the pavement stop him. He bends down to see what they are and picks up the mechanical monkey from the wreckage. He smiles and winds it up. He sets it on the sidewalk and sits down. He watches it dance for a moment, happily. A siren is HEARD distantly, growing louder. Jim pays no attention to it as he winds the monkey again and releases it for its dance.

SUPERIMPOSE TITLE: "REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE"
As SIREN rises piercingly close, and Jim looks up, we DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE SHOT – THROBBING LIGHT OF POLICE CAR – NIGHT
The siren SCREAMING wildly, then dying. The SOUND

of brakes. CAMERA MOVES TO REVEAL the police car stopped at the entrance of a Precinct Station. Two OFFICERS dismount, bearing between them the struggling Jim. They bear him up the steps and in through the double doors.

INSIDE PRECINCT STATION (RECEPTION AREA)
A large open space onto which several corridors converge. In the middle is a Sergeant's desk, really a quadrangular counter in the center of which the SERGEANT stands. There are a few glass-walled interviewing rooms which open off the area, and several benches lining the walls. The scene is one of confusion, activity and waiting. Phones ring. The arrested pass in custody of officers. A small Christmas tree attempts to cheer the atmosphere. Present among others at Jim's entrance is JUDY, who is blond and sixteen. She sits on a crowded bench wearing an expression of downcast bitterness. On a bench across the way from her are three remarkably dirty little Mexican children without shoes or socks. The oldest is a BOY of four who is protecting his little SISTER, who in turn mothers an infant crying on the bench beside her. Standing at a corner of the desk is a docile, undersized boy of fifteen named JOHN "PLATO" CRAWFORD. He is shivering. With him is a large NEGRO WOMAN, his maid. Jim comes through the doors and is led to the desk. One of the Officers presents a brief report to the Sergeant, who examines it.

SERGEANT Mixed up in that beating on Twelfth Street?

OFFICER No. Plain drunkenness.

SERGEANT This says he was picked up there.

OFFICER They had him on the carpet for an hour at Headquarters. He's clear. Plain drunkenness.

SERGEANT Young squirt. All right—You want to lean him against something? Stand him over there.

The Officer leads Jim to Judy's bench and stands him against the wall beside it.

Jim is frisked, a look of prayer on his upturned face. The Officer finds the toy monkey in his pocket and would take it, but when Jim asks to keep it, the Officer hands it back and moves away. Another officer enters and leads the prisoner who is sitting next to Judy into another room. Jim sits beside her. He smiles at her but receives only a chilling look. He winds the monkey up and sets it dancing on the floor, but she is not amused. CAMERA PANS to SHOW others reacting to the monkey with pleasure. We see Plato look up and smile a little. CAMERA STOPS on the MEXICAN CHILDREN, who are smiling too. A bald JUVENILE OFFICER named GENE squats before them, smiling.

GENE You going to tell me your name now?

LITTLE BOY *(Touching Gene's bald pate)* Where's your hair?

GENE It's all gone.

LITTLE BOY Did you get a haircut?

GENE No—it just fell out!

LITTLE BOY *(Sympathetically)* Aw—

Gene laughs as another Juvenile Officer enters and pauses to look at the children. His name is RAY.

RAY What gang does *he* belong to?

GENE Give him a couple of years.

RAY Where's your mamma, honey?

LITTLE BOY I don't know.

Ray and Gene exchange looks, then Ray moves across to Judy – CAMERA FOLLOWING. He looks down at her, consults the file in his hand.

RAY Judy—we're ready for you now.

JUDY *(A mumble)* He hates me.

RAY What?

JUDY He hates me.

She rises. Ray leads her to one of the glass-walled offices. CAMERA MOVES with them. Jim watches them go.

RAY What makes you think he hates you, Judy?

JUDY I don't think. I *know*. He looks at me like I'm the ugliest thing in the world. He doesn't like my friends—he—*(Ray leads her into office)*

INSIDE SMALL OFFICE
as Judy comes in, Ray following. He indicates a chair for her while he sits down behind a desk.

JUDY He doesn't like anything about me—he calls me—he calls me—

She starts to cry. She doesn't hide it, but keeps wiping the tears with the palms of her hands.

RAY He makes you feel pretty unhappy?

JUDY *(Crying)* He calls me a dirty tramp—my own father!

RAY Do you think your father means that?

JUDY Yes! I don't know! I mean maybe he doesn't mean it but he acts like he does.

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RAY I guess how he feels about you seems pretty important. *(Judy withdraws)* Is that why you were wandering around at one o'clock in the morning?

JUDY I was just taking a walk.

RAY You weren't looking for company, were you?

JUDY No.

RAY Did you stop to talk to anyone, Judy? *(She is silent)* Do you enjoy that?

JUDY No. I don't even know why I do it.

RAY Do you think you can get back at your dad that way? I mean sometimes if we can't get as close to somebody as we'd like we have to try making them jealous—so they'll have to pay attention. Did you ever think of that?

JUDY I'll never get close to *anybody*.

RAY Some kids stomped a man on Twelfth Street, Judy.

JUDY You know where they picked me up! *Twelfth* Street! I wasn't even *near* there!

RAY Would you like to go home if we can arrange it? *(No answer. Ray addresses WOMAN OFFICER)* Did you notify the parents?

WOMAN OFFICER She wouldn't give me their number.

RAY What's your number, Judy? We'll see if your dad will come and get you.

Judy looks up hopefully.

RAY Unless you really don't want to go home. *(Silence)* Would you rather stay here?

CAMERA MOVES CLOSE ON
JUDY
She looks up and speaks very quietly.

JUDY Lexington 05549.

The wail of a SIREN is heard. Judy looks off through the glass wall toward Jim. Ray is heard dialing.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM'S BENCH
Jim sits with his head back, eyes closed. As the SIREN mounts louder, Jim opens his mouth and imitates it – a long, forlorn wail.

MEDIUM SHOT – PLATO AND NEGRO WOMAN
Plato smiles faintly and moves out toward Jim, Negro woman following. CAMERA PANS WITH THEM. Plato sits by Jim. She stands over them. Jim's wailing continues.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM, PLATO, NEGRO WOMAN
AN OFFICER MOVES INTO SHOT.

OFFICER Hey!

Jim continues for a moment.

OFFICER *Hey*! That's enough static out of you.

JIM Want me to imitate a stupid cop?

OFFICER Cut it out now. I'm warning you.

JIM Yes, ma'am.

The Officer moves out. The Negro Woman bends over Plato who is shivering violently.

NEGRO WOMAN You shivering, John? You cold?

Plato shakes his head. Jim notices him.

JIM Want my jacket?

Plato looks up at Jim.

JIM You want my jacket? It's warm.

Plato wants it but shakes his head "no."

FULL SHOT – JUDY'S OFFICE
Ray and Judy seated as before. Judy is still gazing through the glass.

RAY Your mother will be down in a few minutes, Judy—

JUDY *(Clearing)* What?

RAY Your mother will be down in a few minutes.

JUDY *(Startled)* My *mother*?

Ray signals to a Woman Officer just outside and leads Judy to the door.

OUTSIDE DOOR
as Ray turns Judy over to the Woman Officer.

RAY She's being called for.

JUDY You said you'd call my *father*.

RAY Goodbye, Judy. Take it easy.

Judy doesn't answer. Ray goes back inside as CAMERA LEADS the Woman Officer and Judy past Jim's bench. CAMERA STOPS on Jim, Plato and the Negro Woman. Jim stares at Judy and whistles but gets no reaction. Gene enters and comes to the Negro Woman.

GENE John Crawford?

NEGRO WOMAN Yes, sir.

GENE Come with me, John.

Plato rises and goes with Gene, the Negro Woman following. Jim is alone. He closes his eyes, throws his head

back and gives another siren wail as CAMERA MOVES CLOSE on his face.

VOICE OF JIM'S MOTHER *(O.S.)* Jim!

Jim looks up suddenly, scared. Then he smiles mysteriously and staggers to his feet.

LOW ANGLE – TIGHT THREE – JIM'S PARENTS AND GRANDMA
framed in the doorway, frozen. They are all dressed in evening clothes. The MOTHER is a very chic but rather hard-faced woman. The FATHER is an unfeathered man. The GRANDMA is the smallest, also very chic and very bright-eyed.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM
as he faces them.

JIM Merry Christmas.

TIGHT SHOT – THE FAMILY

MOTHER Where were you tonight? They called us at the club and I got the fright of my life!

Silence.

FATHER Where were you tonight, Jimbo?

CLOSE SHOT – JIM
He says nothing.

CLOSE SHOT – FATHER
laughing uncomfortably.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM

JIM You think I'm funny?

Jim turns suddenly and walks to the glass wall of the office behind which Plato, the Negro Woman and Gene are visible. He looks through the glass partition which separates him from Plato.

JIM Why didn't you take my jacket?

INSIDE OFFICE
Jim is seen through the glass. He moves away. Plato is still shivering, cracking his knuckles.

GENE Do you know why you shot those puppies, John? *(Silence)* Is that what they call you or do you have a nickname?

PLATO *(A murmur)* Plato.

NEGRO WOMAN You talk to the man nice now, hear? He's going to help you.

PLATO Nobody can help me.

GENE Can you tell me why you killed the puppies, Plato?

PLATO No, sir. I just went next door to look at them like I always do. They were nursing on their mother and I did it. I guess I'm just no good?

GENE What do you think's going to happen, you do things like that?

PLATO I don't know. End up in the electric chair?

GENE Where did you get the gun?

PLATO In my mother's drawer.

NEGRO WOMAN She keep it to protect herself, sir. She scared without a man in the house.

GENE Where's your mother tonight, Plato?

PLATO She's away.

NEGRO WOMAN Seems like she's always going somewhere. She got a sister in Chicago and she go for the holiday. She says her sister is all the family she has.

GENE Where's your father?

Plato is silent.

NEGRO WOMAN They not together, sir. We don't see him in a long time now.

GENE Do you hear from him, son?

Plato looks up as Jim and his family move into the next office. Jim smiles at Plato, who returns it feebly, then looks away—embarrassed.

GENE You know if the boy ever talked to a psychiatrist?

PLATO *(Smiling a bit)* Headshrinker?

NEGRO WOMAN *(Laughing)* Oh, Mrs. Crawford don't believe in them!

GENE Well, maybe she better start.

OTHER OFFICE
Jim, his parents, Grandma and Ray are gathered in the small room. Jim is humming "THE RIDE OF THE VALKYRIES" to himself as if he had absolutely no interest in what is happening around him. Ray suspects this is something more than mere disinterest, so lets the humming go on, in order to discover its real purpose. Grandma watches everything like a tennis match, reacting with soft little sounds of terror or astonishment or sympathy. No one pays any attention to her. For a moment no one talks. Ray watches Jim as he hums. Then the Father shakes his head and looks up.

FATHER I don't see what's so bad about taking a little drink.

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RAY You don't?

FATHER No. I definitely don't. I did the sa—

RAY He's a minor, Mr. Stark, and it looks to me like he had more than a little drink.

FATHER *(Chuckling)* Say, listen—

MOTHER *(To Jim: in intimate, half-humorous disapproval)* Jim—don't hum.

Jim merely rolls his eyes at her, then away—but continues his humming.

FATHER I guess I cut pretty loose in my day too.

MOTHER Really, Frank? When was that?

FATHER Listen—*can't you wait till we get home?*

RAY Whoa! Whoa! I know you're a little upset but—

FATHER Sorry.

RAY What about you, Jim? Got anything to say for yourself?

Jim stops humming and shrugs.

RAY Not interested, huh?

Jim shakes his head.

MOTHER Can't you answer? What's the matter with you anyhow?

FATHER He's just loaded, honey.

MOTHER I was talking to *Jim*.

FATHER *(To Ray)* Let me just explain to you—we just moved here, y'understand? The kid has no friends yet and—

JIM Tell him why we moved here.

FATHER Hold it, Jim.

JIM You can't protect me.

FATHER *(To Jim)* You mind if I *try*? You have to slam the door in my face? *(To Ray)* I try to get to him—what happens? *(To Jim)* Don't I give you everything you want? A bicycle—you get a bicycle. A car—

JIM You buy me things. Thank you.

FATHER Not just buy! You hear all this talk about not loving your kids enough. We give you love and affection, don't we?

Silence; Jim is fighting his emotions but his eyes grow wet.

FATHER Then what is it? I can't even touch you anymore but you pull away. I want to understand you. Why'd you get drunk? You must have had a reason.

Jim stares straight ahead, trying not to listen.

FATHER Was it because we went to that party? *(Silence)* You know what kind of drunken brawls those parties turn into—it's no place for kids.

MOTHER A minute ago you said you didn't care if he drinks.

GRANDMA He said a *little* drink.

JIM *(Exploding)* You're tearing me apart!

MOTHER What?

JIM Stop tearing me apart! You say one thing and he says another and then everybody changes back—

MOTHER That's a fine way to behave!

GRANDMA *(Smiling)* Well, you know who he takes after!

RAY Outside, Jim. Come outside.

Ray pushes him out the door firmly, and into the office vacated by Plato and Gene.

RAY Excuse us a minute?

FATHER *(Very overwrought)* Sure, sure.

GENE'S OFFICE
Ray and Jim alone.

JIM Someone should put poison in her Epsom salts.

RAY Grandma?

No answer. Jim turns away from Ray.

JIM Get lost.

RAY Hang loose, boy. I'm warning you.

JIM Wash up and go home.

RAY Big tough character. You don't kid me, pal. How come you're not wearing your boots?

Suddenly Jim flings himself at Ray who deftly flips him past and drops him near the desk.

RAY Too bad you didn't connect. You could have gone to Juvenile Hall. That's what you want, isn't it?

JIM No.

RAY Sure it is. You want to bug us till we have to lock you up. Why?

JIM Leave me alone.

RAY No.

JIM I don't *know* why—!

RAY Go on—don't give me that. Someone giving you hard looks?

JIM I just get so—*(Fighting tears)* Boy, sometimes the temperature goes way up.

RAY *(Suddenly gentle)* Okay. Okay. Let it out.

Jim starts crying.

RAY You feel like you want to blow your wheels right now?

JIM All the time! I don't know what gets into me—but I keep looking for trouble and I always—I swear you better lock me up. I'm going to smash somebody—I know it.

RAY Try the desk.

Jim smashes his fist against it, letting loose for a moment. Ray watches, then sits near him.

RAY That's why you moved, 'cause you were in trouble?

JIM No. It's them. They're not happy together and they keep blaming it on the place. Just *move* and everything'll be roses and sunshine.

RAY But you don't think that's a solution?

Jim is silent.

RAY Who do you want to kill, Jim?

Jim picks at his nails.

RAY Things pretty tough for you at home?

JIM She eats him alive and he takes it. *(Jim stares at his family through the glass wall)* What a zoo!

RAY What?

JIM A zoo. He always wants to be my pal, you know? But how can I give him anything when he's—I mean I love him and I don't want to hurt him—but I don't know what to do anymore except maybe die.

RAY Pretty mixed up?

JIM If he could—

RAY "If he could" what? You mean your father?

JIM I mean if he had the guts to knock mom cold once, I bet she'd be happy and I bet she'd stop picking. They make mush out of him. Just mush. One thing I know is I never want to be like him, but I don't want trouble. I bet you see right through me, don't you?

Ray shrugs.

JIM How can anyone grow up in this circus?

RAY You got me, Jim—but they do. Want some water?

JIM *(As Ray gets a cup of water from the cooler)* Boy—if I had one day when I didn't have to be all confused and ashamed of everything—or I felt I belonged some place.

RAY *(Giving him water)* Here. Look, will you do something for me? If the pot starts boiling again will you come and see me before you get yourself in a jam? Even if you just want to talk—come in and shoot the breeze. It's easier sometimes than talking to your folks.

JIM Okay—

RAY Any time—day or night. You calmed down enough to go back now?

JIM *(Smiling)* You serious?

Ray smiles and opens the door.

RAY'S OFFICE
as Jim comes toward his Mother and forces himself to kiss her.

JIM I'm sorry.

MOTHER All right, darling.

She rises and takes his arm. They start out through the door into the hall, followed by Grandma and Father.

GRANDMA *(To Ray)* This was all very unfortunate, but he made a mistake and he's sorry—so we're not going to have any more trouble. He's always been a lovely boy—

JIM Lovely! Grandma—if you tell another lie you're going to turn to stone.

RAY Luck, Jim. Don't forget.

FATHER *(Offering Ray three cigars)* Have some cigars.

RAY No, thanks, I don't smoke.

FATHER Go on—Give 'em to your friends.

RAY No—thanks very much, Mr. Stark.

MOTHER Frank—*he doesn't want any.*

Jim grins at Ray who nods. They all leave. Ray, looking after them, shakes his head and lights a cigarette. We see Jim and his family pass through the main door. Waiting to enter, in the custody of some uniformed POLICE, are Buzz and the kids we saw at the opening, sullen and truculent. As they march into the lobby and Jim grows smaller in the distance, the MUSIC COMES UP AND OUT.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:
LOW ANGLE – FACES OF LITTLE CHILDREN – MORNING
The children are staring past CAMERA, smiling. Suddenly flames burst upward from below. Some of them draw back. CAMERA MOVES TO SHOW that the children are standing in an alley over a burning Christmas tree, still with tinsel clinging to it. One of the kids picks up the tree by its trunk and rushes away with it down the alley, holding it like a flaming torch. The others follow, screaming with pleasure, as CAMERA PANS with them. The littlest of

them, a boy of five, stops near us, looking after the disappearing tree. The shouts of the children wane.

BOY *(Quietly)* Goodbye, Christmas.

Judy rushes out from a backyard behind him. She is carrying schoolbooks and a bag-lunch. She wears a polo coat against the winter wind.

JUDY *(Yelling)* Beau!

The boy, who is her brother, looks up but doesn't move. Judy stops at her gate. A car careens down the alley, past him.

LONG SHOT – JUDY AND BEAU
seen through a window in Jim's house. Jim is in f.g. looking out through the curtains. He smiles.

JUDY *(Yelling)* What are you trying to do, get yourself killed?

BEAU *(Laughing)* Yes!

VOICE OF JIM'S MOTHER Your eggs are on the table, dear.

Jim turns from window and PASSES CAMERA.

FULL SHOT – JIM'S DINING ROOM
The Mother is just setting a plate of eggs at Jim's place. The Father is seated, drinking coffee and looking at the newspaper. Grandma comes in from the kitchen. Jim is neatly dressed in tie, tweed jacket and slacks.

MOTHER Sit down and eat—you'll be late.

JIM *(Approaching table)* It'd stick in my throat, Mom. I'm nervous or something—

GRANDMA It's a wonder we don't all have TB or some other terrible disease after living in all those smoky cities!

MOTHER Well, drink your milk anyhow.

GRANDMA *(Muttering)* There aren't so many factories here.

FATHER Mother—

JIM *(Still standing; he drinks)* You make any sandwiches?

FATHER My first day of school, mother'd make me eat and by golly I could never even swallow till recess—

MOTHER *(Bringing bag of lunch from buffet)* There's nothing to be nervous about. Here's a peanut butter and meat loaf—*(Jim makes a mouth-stuck-together-with-peanut-butter sound)*

GRANDMA What did I tell you? Peanut butter!

MOTHER Well, there's a thermos of orange juice and some applesauce cake in the wax paper to wash it down.

GRANDMA I baked that!

JIM *(He kisses her cheek)* 'Bye, Mom.

MOTHER Goodbye, dear.

FATHER *(Rising)* So long, young fella. Knock 'em dead, like your old man used to!

JIM Sure—*(He gets to the door and turns)* You know something? I have a feeling we're going to stay here.

FATHER And listen—watch out about the pals you choose—Know what I mean? Don't let them choose you—

But Jim is on his way out.

FULL SHOT – JIM'S BACKYARD
as Jim comes out of the kitchen door into the early sunshine.

JUDY'S VOICE Come out of the alley, Beau! This is the last time I'm going to call you.

Jim blinks, pauses and sees Judy. He takes off his tie and puts it in his pocket. Then he starts across the backyard, CAMERA PANNING WITH HIM TO:

FULL SHOT – THE ALLEY
with Jim coming out of his gate, Judy and Beau visible beyond. He stops again.

JUDY Beau! All right—go to school alone!

She starts down the alley. Beau skips after her and starts tightrope-walking the gutter gravel.

JIM *(Calling)* Hey!

Judy glances at him briefly, but continues. Jim follows a few yards, but on his side of the alley.

JIM Hey, didn't I see you before some place?

Judy ignores him, but something self-conscious happens to her walk. Jim runs across the alley.

MEDIUM SHOT – JUDY
stopping as Jim enters. Beau tightrope-walking on down the hill.

JIM Hi. I saw you before.

JUDY Bully for you.

JIM You don't have to be unfriendly.

JUDY Now that's true!

JIM *(Smiling)* See?

JUDY "Life is crushing in on me."

JIM *(Smiling)* "Life can be beautiful." You live around here?

JUDY Who lives?

JIM See, I'm new.

JUDY Won't mother be proud.

JIM You're really flipped—aren't you.

Judy looks up, a little surprised.

JIM Look—I don't know where anything is—I mean the school. I'm supposed to go to Dawson High.

Judy looks him over from top to bottom and laughingly shakes her head.

JUDY You going there?

JIM Yeah—why?

JUDY Dig the square wardrobe!

JIM *(Defensively)* Yeah. Where's the high school.

JUDY *(A little softer)* University and Tenth. Want to carry my books?

JIM No, but I got a car. I could take you.

JUDY The kids take me.

JIM Oh.

JUDY Well—see you.

JIM Yeah.

JUDY I bet you're a real yo-yo.

JIM I'm not so bad.

Judy laughs.

JIM The sidewalk's not even warm yet.

JUDY What?

Jim laughs. Judy moves down the hill, away from him. Beau moves over to take her hand. She pulls it away. He goes on tightrope-walking. She glances back.

JUDY *(Yelling)* You'll be late!

Jim smiles slightly, remembering. Then he walks briskly across the alley to his car.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:
FULL SHOT – SERVE YOURSELF GAS STATION
It seems abandoned except for a MAN ATTENDANT in f.g. who is shaving, and a GIRL ATTENDANT, wearing a uniform, who is wiping windshield of car in b.g. Suddenly a heap screams in. Its radio is blaring and its horn seems stuck. It heads for the farthest pump. The Man Attendant looks up, continues shaving more quickly.

CLOSE SHOT – THE HEAP – FULL OF KIDS
as it comes to a jolting stop. The boys wear suede sports coats, leather jackets, black peggers, boots. Their clothing is not uniform – it is the air they assume which is uniform: swaggering, self-conscious, piratical. Someone is always combing his hair. The driver is Buzz, whom we recognize as the leader of the stomp gang we met on Christmas Eve. He wears a tanker jacket. With him are CHICK, a slight bespectacled lad; CRUNCH, Buzz's first lieutenant; COOKIE, a hanger-on; GOON, a character; and the girls HELEN and MILLIE. Buzz is screaming as he jams on the brakes.

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BUZZ *Service*!

HELEN *(Leaning out)* S'il vous plaît! Un peu de service!

GOON Stella-a-a-a!

The GIRL ATTENDANT comes racing up to them.

GIRL Why, it's Marlon!

GOON Want to make the colored lights go around and around?

GIRL Not with you, child. What'll it be?

BUZZ Only the best and—

GIRL *I can't hear*!

BUZZ *(Combing his hair)* Cut it.

Chick snaps off the radio.

BUZZ *(Getting out)* Ethyl, honey—all the way.

OUTSIDE CAR
as Buzz comes to front of car and the Girl unscrews the fuel tank lid. Buzz raises the hood.

BUZZ Crunch!

CRUNCH *(Materializing and through following scene remaining at Buzz's side)* Ho!

BUZZ *(Quietly—looking around)* You picked up on the other creep?

CRUNCH *(Looking off)* He's shaving. We're in!

BUZZ Cookie!

COOKIE Yeah.

BUZZ Make it with the air! Let's go! Come on!

Crunch has leaped onto the concrete pump dais and is looking off at the MAN ATTENDANT. Cookie has seized the air hose. Buzz has raised the hood. Goon sidles to the girl and leers at her.

GOON Little speed, baby. Jump jump jump.

GIRL Simmer down, Marlon. You'll explode.

GOON *Powee*!

CRUNCH *(To Buzz)* The creep is washing his face.

COOKIE *(With air hose)* Which one?

BUZZ Left rear.

COOKIE I meant which face?

BUZZ Ha. Ha. That's a belly.

Buzz nervously checks the oil. Cookie on his knees, inflates tire. Crunch lights a cigarette, puts it in Buzz's mouth. Judy appears in b.g. running. Buzz sees her and waves. A chorus of greetings. Judy comes to Buzz.

JUDY Hi, doll.

BUZZ Kissie—kissie?

They kiss ardently and without love. The others whistle.

JUDY *(Confidently)* You on probation?

BUZZ Yeah. Hey, you dig my tanker jacket?

JUDY Crazy.

BUZZ All the cast'll be wearing them now.

CRUNCH He's drying his hands. Looking up. Here he comes—slow and easy. Honk!

BUZZ Honk! *(To Girl)* That's enough.

GIRL I thought you said to fill it!

GOON He's a monster.

GIRL Why'nt you take your nickels someplace else?

She slaps the nozzle into its rack and screws in the top.

ANOTHER ANGLE – HEAP
There is a rush to get into the car. In b.g., the Man Attendant is walking toward them. Buzz pauses bravely to comb his hair in a side mirror. Another car squeals in and Jim gets out and approaches, smiling.

JUDY *(Urging: to Buzz)* Stop making mad love to yourself.

Buzz snickers and puts comb casually into his pocket.

JIM *(To Judy)* Hi again.

BUZZ *(Staring)* What's *that*!

JUDY A new disease.

JIM Seems like I'm always asking you questions. Where's University and Tenth?

SIMULTANEOUSLY
JUDY *(Pointing right)* That way!
CHICK *(Pointing left)* That way!
BUZZ *(Pointing up)* That way!

They slam the doors as the Man Attendant rushes in, smiling. He is drying his face with a towel. He glances at the meter while Buzz guns his engine.

GIRL What characters! I'm telling you!

MAN That's three twenty-one, kids.

BUZZ Put it on my bill!

The kids laugh wildly. The radio blares again. The car zooms away.

THREE SHOT – JIM, GIRL, MAN
Jim looks after the kids, still optimistic.

GIRL Lovely people . . .

MAN Just charming. You see the license number?

JIM Huh? *(He takes out his glasses, puts them on)* No. No. I don't have time for details today.

He laughs and walks out. The Attendants look after him, puzzled.

MAN Is everybody crazy?

DISSOLVE TO:
CLOSE SHOT – BICYCLE RACK
Wheels spin in, one after another and drive straight into their slots. As the nearest bike moves in:

MEDIUM SHOT – PLATO
just getting off his motor scooter. He comes forward, passes CAMERA WHICH PANS WITH him then stops – as the school is suddenly revealed. Music starts with a crash and keeps mounting through the following. Plato sighs and moves away from us to join the parade of students filling the Main approach.

PARKING LOT
as cars scream into their places noisily. Jim gets out of one and comes forward. A motorcycle roars by, just missing him. Jim stares off and starts to move as CAMERA PANS WITH HIM TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE – SCHOOL
Another crash of music. Jim moves toward the parade.

FULL SHOT – MIDWAY DOWN MAIN APPROACH
A number of kids pass, gossiping happily as they greet each other for the first time since vacation. CAMERA SEARCHES over them and STOPS upon our special group moving toward us – Buzz, Judy and the rest, all abreast. Others must part at their passage or be elbowed out of the way, staring resentfully, but not daring to challenge the group's priority. Plato runs forward, past them.

DOOR FROM WITHIN
bouncing from hand to hand as students enter. Plato

moves through the door and disappears in a milling of kids. Judy enters with her group and moves on with them.

MEDIUM SHOT – MONITOR (INSIDE CORRIDOR)
The Monitor is an athletic letter-sweater boy with an arm brassard that bears the letters "HC." Kids pour past him. Jim enters.

JIM Hi—can you tell me where I go? I'm just starting here.

MONITOR *(Pointing at brassard)* Mr. Bassett's office—203. He'll tell you where your homeroom is—

JIM Thanks a lot.

Jim moves out.

ANGLE SHOT – CORRIDOR
SHOOTING PAST a row of steel lockers. The clash and slam of doors as kids throw in coats, pull out books and primp for the day ahead. Plato comes to his locker, which is the nearest, and opens it.

FULL SHOT – CORRIDOR
Jim moves toward us from the distance. Crowded at the entrance to a classroom in f.g. are Judy and her pals. They are sneaking a smoke, passing the cigarette from one cupped hand to another. As Jim comes near, Judy sees him. So do the others. They fold their arms across their chests and whistle "WE ARE THE GIRLS OF THE INSTITUTE" – all but Judy. Jim glances at her and continues on PAST CAMERA. A bell starts ringing crazily over the music.

CLOSE SHOT – PLATO
He is straightening his tie in the mirror. Above it, pasted to the locker door, is a still of Alan Ladd. In the mirror, we can see Jim moving past. Plato sees him, too. He wheels around and stares.

PLATO *(To himself)* Hi.

The strident music of the students diminishes. The ringing of the bell stops. There remains only Jim's footsteps.

LONG SHOT – JIM
moving off down the corridor. Plato is in f.g. looking after him. He slams his locker and starts after Jim, moving at the same speed and hovering near the wall. The footsteps of the two boys echo stonily. They are alone. Jim stops at a bulletin board near a bend in the corridor. Plato stops too.

BULLETIN BOARD
Jim looking at the notices. Plato drifts in several yards away and hangs near the wall watching Jim, who doesn't see him. Jim reads:

INSERT: BULLETIN BOARD
"ATTENTION ALL JUNIORS AND SENIORS
PLANETARIUM
FIELD TRIP
2PM – SHARP!"

ANOTHER ANGLE – JIM AND PLATO
as Jim turns from bulletin board and starts away.

PLATO *(Clearing his throat)* Hi.

JIM Hi there.

PLATO You remember me?

JIM No, I don't think so—

PLATO I'm sorry—I made a mistake.

Jim starts TOWARD CAMERA as Plato, after another look, turns in the opposite direction and walks away from us, smashing his fist against the wall as he goes. Jim stops, full IN CAMERA. His face clouds, trying to remember. He turns full around to look after Plato, then turns back and continues on his way. The footsteps fade.

DISSOLVE TO:
FULL SHOT – PLANETARIUM
seen from the parking lot – a great dome crowns it – the city lies below. CAMERA PICKS UP Jim's car maneuvering through the crowded lot. In b.g., a few other latecomers are dashing up steps to Planetarium. Jim drives into a small lot behind observatory, parks, then runs to observatory entrance.

FULL SHOT – LOBBY
as Jim runs through, opens door of theater and passes inside.

LONG SHOT – FULL OF STARS – SEEN PAST JIM'S HEAD – DARKNESS
This is not our sky. It is a replica of it projected onto the dome of the Planetarium. The stars slide their tentative ways in a never-changing pattern. One of them is much larger than the rest and increases in size as we watch. MUSIC of the spheres is HEARD – a high, threatening tremolo.

LECTURER'S VOICE For many days before the end of our Earth, people will look into the night sky and notice a star, increasingly bright, and increasingly near.

Jim looks around for a seat and passes down aisle. Seen beyond him is the projector, moving slowly, its great dumbbell head sparkling with pinpoints of light. Jim takes a seat in front row. Plato, in the row behind him, moves over a seat to be nearer. They exchange looks.

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FULL SHOT – NORMAL STUDENTS
watching intently.

LECTURER'S VOICE As this star approaches us, the weather will change. The great polar fields of the north and south will rot and divide, and the seas will turn warmer.

LOW ANGLE – LECTURER
A dry, elderly man in a stiff white collar. He is seated at a desk, the light from the reading lamp spilling onto his face.

LECTURER The last of us search the heavens and stand amazed. For the stars will still be there, moving through their ancient rhythms.

ANGLE SHOT – STUDENTS
Some watching, some taking notes. An OLD LADY TEACHER in f.g. taps the head of two kids in the row before her. They stop their whispering. She smiles at them.

LECTURER'S VOICE The familiar constellations that illuminate our night will seem as they have always seemed: eternal, unchanged and little moved by the shortness of time between our planet's birth and its demise.

MEDIUM SHOT – PLATO
staring upward.

LECTURER'S VOICE Orion, the Hunter.

Plato looks off.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM (FROM PLATO'S ANGLE)
Jim is seated in the row ahead of Plato. His lips are parted as he looks up.

JIM Boy!

PLATO *(Leaning forward)* What?

JIM *(Surprised)* Once you been up there, you know you been someplace!

LECTURER'S VOICE Gemini, the Twins.

TWO SHOT – JUDY AND BUZZ
Buzz has his arm around her. He is nuzzling her ear. She is blandly watching the dome.

LECTURER'S VOICE Cancer, the Crab.

Buzz pokes Judy who looks at him. He curves his wrist toward her, opening and closing his first two fingers like the pincers of a crab.

BUZZ I'm a crab!

She laughs. So do the others.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM (PLATO BEHIND) – SEEN FROM JUDY'S ANGLE
Jim turns at the SOUND of the laughter, and smiles.

LECTURER'S VOICE Taurus, the Bull.

JIM *(In good imitation)* Moo!

He waits for approval.

ANGLE SHOT – JUDY, BUZZ AND GROUP (SEEN FROM JIM'S ANGLE)
He is in f.g. They are staring at him. Nobody laughs.

CRUNCH *(Flat)* Yeah, moo.

BUZZ Moo. That's real cute. Moo.

GOON Hey, he's real rough—

CRUNCH I bet he fights with cows.

BUZZ Moo.

They turn from him. Jim withers and looks front. Judy smiles a little and looks away so the others cannot notice her amusement.

LECTURER'S VOICE Sagittarius and Aries—all as they have ever been.

Plato leans in and touches Jim's shoulder, lightly at first, then harder. Jim turns to him.

PLATO You shouldn't monkey with him.

JIM What?

PLATO He's a wheel. So's she. It's hard to make friends with them.

JIM I don't want to make friends.

He turns back, unhappy at having revealed himself.

ANOTHER SHOT – JUDY, BUZZ, CRUNCH – JIM SEEN IN B.G.
The kids are whispering among themselves and pointing at Jim, who looks up and notices. He is getting uncomfortable.

LECTURER'S VOICE And while the flash of our beginnings has not yet traveled the light years into distance—

FULL SHOT – THE DOME
The star rushes near, looming larger and larger. The music rises in tension and volume.

LECTURER'S VOICE Has not yet been seen by planets deep within the other galaxies, we will disappear into the blackness of the space from which we came.

TWO SHOT – JIM AND PLATO
staring upward, cringing back into their seats as the light on their faces increases. Music is up loud.

FULL SHOT – THE DOME
seen past Plato's head. The heavens grow brighter as the star plummets near. Music at crescendo.

LECTURER'S VOICE Destroyed as we began in a burst of gas and fire.

The sky is blasted by a wild flash of light. Music reaches explosion. The stars appear again.

MOVING SHOT – FACES OF NORMAL KIDS
watching seriously – very impressed.

LECTURER'S VOICE The heavens are still and cold once more. In all the complexity of our universe and the galaxies beyond, the Earth will not be missed.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM AND PLATO
looking up.

LECTURER'S VOICE Through the infinite reaches of space, the problems of Man seem trivial and naïve indeed. And Man, existing alone, seems to be an episode of little consequences.

Plato ducks his head down on the back of Jim's chair. Jim looks at him.

LECTURER'S VOICE That's all. Thank you very much.

The lights go on. The rustle and confusion of kids stretching after sitting too long. Scattered applause. Jim rises and ruffles Plato's hair.

JIM Hey, it's over. The world ended.

Plato looks up at him.

PLATO What does he know about Man alone?

MEDIUM SHOT – LECTURER
as he reaches over and turns a dial. "MORNING SONG" by Grieg comes on softly.

LOW ANGLE – OLD LADY TEACHER
rising. She stares around at the bustling students and claps her hands sharply, but the noise is barely heard above the tumult.

TEACHER *(Shrill)* May I have your attention? May I please have your attention? Classes will meet at the buses outside. May I have your attention? *(To herself)* The heck with it.

She picks up her coat and bag.

PLANETARIUM PARKING LOT
School buses and autos, some new and some heaps, are parked in f.g. Beyond is the dome of the Planetarium. Kids mill about, some already driving off in their cars. One bus, already full, pulls PAST CAMERA.

MEDIUM SHOT – FRONT OF BUS – SEEN FROM WITHIN – DRIVER IN F.G.
Kids swarm up the steps and enter. Plato is among them, but keeps looking back for Jim. Plato boards the bus and pauses near the driver to peer through windshield. His face clouds.

LONG SHOT – JUDY AND GROUP
Seen from Plato's ANGLE through windshield. They are standing idly in a loose line near Buzz's car. They are looking back toward Planetarium.

MEDIUM SHOT – FRONT OF BUS – SEEN FROM WITHIN
Plato turns suddenly and pushes his way past the kids who are boarding.

PLATO Excuse me. Excuse me.

FULL SHOT – PARKING LOT – BUS IN F.G.
Beyond it, Judy and the group are visible. Plato squeezes out.

MALE TEACHER John, where you going?

PLATO I forgot something. I'll get a hitch.

Plato moves quickly past the teacher who climbs in. The door slams, the bus moves away. Plato stops and looks after it. The last cars are clearing the lot. Only Jim's and Buzz's remain. Plato looks at the small, waiting group.

MEDIUM SHOT – THE GROUP – SEEN FROM THE REAR
Plato in the distance facing them.

BUZZ What you looking at?

MEDIUM SHOT – PLATO
Wild-eyed with fear.

PLATO Nothing.

He runs off, CAMERA PANNING with him. His goal is the Planetarium entrance, visible beyond. He races toward it frantically.

MEDIUM SHOT – THE GROUP
looking off after Plato. Buzz, nearest CAMERA, pulls a switch-knife from his pocket and pops the long blade open. Judy stares at it, then looks up at Buzz apprehen-

This spread pages **30-35** of original script

sively. Crunch sits down on the bumper and lights a cigarette.

DISPLAY LOBBY – PLANETARIUM
as Plato rushes in, out of breath, stops and looks around. In the distance he sees Jim leaning over the pendulum pit, smoking quietly. Plato doesn't move. Jim hasn't even looked up.

PLATO *(Screaming as if he were yelling "Fire!")* What's your name!

JIM Jim. What's yours?

PLATO *(A little quieter)* Plato. It's a nickname.

Jim nods. Plato goes over to him, CAMERA FOLLOWING, until they are close together, both leaning over the rail.

PLATO Listen, I told you not to fool with them. Now they're waiting for you.

JIM I know. That's why I came back.

PLATO You scared?

JIM I just don't want trouble.

PLATO He has a knife.

JIM I saw it. Gee, look at that thing swing, will you? Do you think it ever stops?

PLATO No. It's perpetual motion.

JIM Oh, I bet some little guy comes in here at night and pushes it. Go-go-go!

Plato walks cautiously to the door and starts outside, CAMERA FOLLOWING.

LONG SHOT – KIDS (CORNER OF OBSERVATORY)
with Plato leaning out of door, seeing them, pulling back quickly.

INSIDE DISPLAY LOBBY
as Plato pulls back through the door. Jim seems to have disappeared. Plato stares around, frightened.

PLATO Jim?

Jim is looking at another exhibit whose mechanical voice is heard.

JIM I'm here.

PLATO *(Coming to him)* They're still there!

Jim nods. They watch the exhibit a while longer.

PLATO Jim—Do you think when the end of the world comes it'll be at night?

JIM No. In the morning.

Plato looks up questioningly. Jim smiles and shrugs.

JIM I just have a feeling.

They start moving, CAMERA LEADING.

PLATO If you don't want trouble, I know a place we can go—*(Jim looks up at him)* It's a big mansion and we could sneak around there and they wouldn't even know. You could be safe—

They turn a corner quickly.

DOORS TO BALCONY (FROM INSIDE)
as Jim and Plato come to them from behind CAMERA, fling the doors open and step outside.

BALCONY
as Jim and Plato come onto it. Leaning on the parapet, Plato points off.

PLATO There it is.

HIGH LONG SHOT – MANSION (MATTE)
It is falling into elegant ruin, casting long afternoon shadows on the great lawns and promenades.

CLOSE-UP – PLATO
looking urgently at Jim.

PLATO Should we go?

TWO SHOT – JIM AND PLATO
Plato's back is to us. Jim looks past him and sees something.

JIM *(Quietly)* The shadows are getting long.

Plato turns to look too.

LONG HIGH SHOT – PARKING LOT
Jim's car is where he left it. Into the driveway, like logs driven before a sea, the shadows of the waiting kids appear and advance until the kids themselves come into view. They pause there a moment, then look up.

HELEN *(Smiling)* Le soleil tombe dans la mer.

Laughter. The kids scatter along the wall at the foot of the balcony stairs. Buzz goes to Jim's car, knife in hand, and stands silently.

LOW ANGLE – TWO SHOT – JIM AND PLATO
staring down from balcony parapet. At last Jim moves out PAST CAMERA.

LOW ANGLE – LONG SHOT – JIM AND PLATO – JUDY IN F.G.
The two boys walk down the stairs. CAMERA PANS with them as they reach parking lot level and start walking past other members of the group.

TRAVELING SHOT – JIM AND PLATO
coming forward.

DOLLY SHOT – BUZZ – FROM JIM'S ANGLE
As CAMERA MOVES IN TOWARD Buzz standing alone at the car, he suddenly bends down and slashes Jim's tire. CAMERA STOPS. There is the hiss of air escaping. Buzz straightens and smiles past CAMERA.

CLOSE SHOT – JIM
inhaling sharply in shock and suppressed anger.

FULL SHOT – OVER JIM'S CAR – GROUP IN B.G.
motionless. Jim and Plato approach the car. Jim stops and looks down. Buzz stands smiling and puts away the knife.

CLOSE SHOT – REAR WHEEL
The tire is slashed, the wheel rests on the ground.

FULL SHOT – CAR
SHOOTING between group and Buzz toward backs of Jim and Plato, who are looking down at car which rests on its rims. Jim turns and moves toward group. He stops, looks from one to the other and smiles nervously. Then he looks straight at Buzz.

JIM *(Wearily)* You know something?

BUZZ What?

JIM *(Reproachfully)* You watch too much television.

MEDIUM SHOT – THE GROUP – AND JIM
Judy has come to Buzz, stands on wall above him.

BUZZ Hey, he's real abstract and different.

JIM I'm cute, too.

Suddenly Goon starts clucking softly like a chicken. One by one the others pick it up. Buzz, the last, crows. Silence.

MEDIUM SHOT – THE GROUP AND JIM

JIM Meaning me?

BUZZ What?

JIM Chicken?

The group gives a quick, short laugh.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM
as he takes off his glasses, smiles. Shakes his head disapprovingly.

JIM You shouldn't call me that.

CLOSE SHOT – PLATO
watching anxiously.

MEDIUM SHOT – BUZZ
with Judy watching above him. Jim enters SHOT until he is close to Buzz's face. He looks up at Judy. CAMERA CLOSES IN until we are tight on the three. The heads are nearly touching.

JIM *(Softly to Judy)* You always at ringside? You always travel in this rank company?

Buzz clutches Jim's hair and jerks his head up. He cracks Jim smartly across the face with the palm of his hand.

CLOSE SHOT – JUDY
looking at Jim. Her eyes clear in recognition.

ANOTHER ANGLE – THE GROUP AND JIM
as Jim tears free and comes at Buzz, slugging. But Buzz, with a laugh, leaps onto the parapet and turns, the knife in his hand again. Jim stops short. The group and Plato move in around him.

JIM I thought only punks fought with knives.

BUZZ Who's fighting? This is the test, man. It's a crazy game.

HELEN Les jeux de courage!

CLOSE-UP – CRUNCH
He is smiling. His arms are around the shoulders of the kids who flank him.

CRUNCH *(Wetting his lips)* Machismo. Machismo.

MEDIUM SHOT – GROUP

JIM Machismo?

BUZZ Somebody find him a knife.

CLOSE SHOT – PLATO – SEEN BETWEEN HEADS OF MILLIE AND COOKIE
Cookie holds up a switch-knife and tosses it over into the circle.

PLATO Jim!

FULL SHOT – CIRCLE
as the knife falls at Jim's feet. Jim stoops and picks up

his weapon, then faces Buzz. Then he springs his blade.

BUZZ You know the action? No cutting. Just sticking—jab real cool.

Buzz hops from the parapet. They begin stalking each other. Buzz slides his knife from hand to hand trying to hypnotize Jim. Suddenly he pokes out and pricks Jim's shirt. The group sighs "Olé!" Jim makes no effort at self-defense. Silence. Buzz pricks Jim again. "Olé!"

BUZZ *(As he maneuvers)* What you waiting on, Toreador? I thought you wanted some action!

Jim cuts out half-heartedly.

BUZZ Big brave bull. Hah! Toro! Hah! Hah!

GOON Moo!

BUZZ Come on—Fascinate us. Impress us. What's happening? Let's go!

JIM I don't want trouble.

BUZZ *(Furious suddenly)* You crud chicken! You're wasting our time!

Viciously, he slaps Jim across the face. Jim lashes out and misses. Buzz hops back.

BUZZ Yeah—that's pretty close. How about a little closer, Toreador? Cut off a button and you get to join the club!

OUTSIDE ENTRANCE OF PARKING LOT
A uniformed GUIDE of middle-age stares PAST CAMERA. Cries of "Olé!" are heard in the distance.

GUIDE *(Turning)* Mr. Minton! Mr. Minton! Trouble!

The Lecturer appears running. He stops short at what he sees, and blinks in the sunlight.

GUIDE Look. There's your audience.

LECTURER Oh, I don't think so. From the school?

INSIDE CIRCLE
Jim is covered with sweat and about to drop. He is getting the worst of it, still refusing to defend himself.

CLOSE SHOT – PLATO
He is looking on in despair.

Suddenly, with a cry, Plato pushes through.

INSIDE CIRCLE
as Plato comes through. His eyes are wild. He holds a tire chain in his hand.

MILLIE Buzzy! Look out! He's got a chain!

BUZZ *(Smiling as he sees Plato)* Hey! Chicken Little!

Buzz trips Plato quickly and kicks him while he's down. Crunch grabs the chain.

JIM All right—you want it, you got it!

Suddenly, Jim transforms. He bores forward expertly—pricks Buzz again and again. Cries of "Olé!" greet him. Buzz is surprised.

FULL SHOT – GROUP
We hear only the breathing of the combatants. Beyond, we see the Guide approaching swiftly. The Lecturer trails at a safe distance.

CLOSE SHOT – CRUNCH
He looks up. His smile fades.

CRUNCH Honk. Let's split.

GROUP
as they look off and see the Guide and Lecturer approach. Buzz and Jim are both breathing hard. Plato is getting to his feet.

BUZZ Split for what? Couple old poop-heads?

He folds up his knife and puts it away. So does Jim.

JIM You satisfied or you want more?

BUZZ How 'bout you? Say the word and you're cold, Jack—you're dead.

JUDY Buzzie—we better get out of here.

BUZZ What's eating you, Judy? You want him alive?

JIM Where can we meet?

BUZZ Know the Millertown bluff?

COOKIE The bluff, Buzz! That's dangerous up there.

BUZZ Draw him a picture, Chicken Little. Eight o'clock. Cookie, you call Moose and get a couple cars. We're going to have us some real kicks. Little chickie-run. You been on chickie-runs before?

JIM Sure—that's all I do.

The Guide bursts in among them. The Lecturer remains on the fringe.

GUIDE All right—all of you—start moving!

JUDY You mean li'l ol' us? What's the matter with the nice man?

GUIDE Don't clown with me.

BUZZ Why'nt you go suck on something sweet?

This spread pages ~~41-44~~ of original script

GUIDE You think you're tough? I got a son twice your size and I can still handle him.

LECTURER Don't lose control, Mr. Jamison. I think if we just explain—

GUIDE Explain to *these?* They think they own the world?

CRUNCH The world is round!

MILLIE The world is flat!

COOKIE All the world's a stage!

There is wild laughter from the kids as they close around the Guide and start edging him away, up the steps toward the Planetarium balcony.

THE KIDS
The world goes round the sun!
Goodbye proud world!
I got the world on a string!
The world's my oyster!
Hey! A fish-eater! Brain food.

They are gone. The Lecturer looks after them, then comes to Jim. Jim looks down at his shirt. There are spots of blood. Plato opens it, spits on a handkerchief and starts to wipe the blood away.

LECTURER *(Smiling wanly; to Jim)* Sometimes the world is too much with us, isn't it, son? What was the disturbance?

JIM Nothing.

LECTURER You're bleeding. Are you all right?

JIM I scratched my mosquito bites. I'm fine. *(Lecturer hesitates)* I'm fine—*thanks!*

Lecturer goes. Jim impatiently closes his shirt.

PLATO Are you really going to meet them?

JIM Who knows. Plato?

PLATO What?

JIM What's a chickie-run?

DISSOLVE TO:
LONG SHOT – THE MOON – NIGHT
low in the night sky. CAMERA MOVES to REVEAL Jim's face, looking up at the moon. A clock chimes six. Jim bends as CAMERA PULLS BACK and SHOWS the backyard of the Stark house in the hard moonlight. Jim turns on the garden faucet and sloshes his face in its flow to wash the blood away, then rises. He buttons his jacket to cover the bloodstains on his shirt and goes quietly into the house through the kitchen door.

DOWNSTAIRS HALL – JIM'S HOUSE
A single light is burning. Jim steals in from the kitchen, peers cautiously into the living room, then starts up the stairs. A crash is heard above. Jim stops, undecided whether to go or stay, then moves quickly up the stairs, no longer trying to be quiet.

UPPER HALL – JIM'S HOUSE
as Jim rises into view at the top of the stairs. He sees a figure on hands and knees mopping something off the rug. Leak-light from the staircase dims details. An apron is tied around the figure's waist and its bow sticks bravely up in the air.

JIM Mom?

The figure straightens and turns around, smiling. It is the Father. He is neatly dressed in his business suit but wears a Mary Petty apron.

FATHER Hiya, Jimbo.

Jim leans against the wall, shaking his head and trying not to laugh. The Father laughs unhappily, trying to make it all seem like a joke.

FATHER You thought it was Mom?

JIM Yeah!

FATHER It's just this get-up. The girl's out and I was bringing Mom supper.

JIM *(Giggling)* And you dropped it?

FATHER *(Laughing too)* Yeah! Shh!

JIM Shh! What is it? Cream of mushroom?

FATHER Celery! You ever seen such a mess in your life?

Jim shakes his head.

FATHER Boy, will I catch it! "You ruined my very best rug!"

JIM You imitating her?

FATHER "If you'd turn on the light you could see where you're going!"

JIM That's funny.

FATHER You realize how long it's been since you and I laughed together?

Jim, his guilt aroused, stops smiling. The Father must cover.

FATHER I better clean this up before she sees it.

He starts dabbing among the spilled dishes with a wet cloth. Jim watches him.

JIM Let her see. What could happen.

FATHER Listen—you don't know!

JIM Dad—

The Father looks up at him

JIM Dad—don't. Don't.

Jim touches his Father's elbow, bringing him to his feet. Then he takes the rag from the old man.

FATHER What's been the trouble between us? Can you tell me?

Jim wishes he could.

INSIDE BEDROOM OF MOTHER
She is lying in bed, doing her nails, trying to listen.

UPPER HALL – JIM AND FATHER
as before.

FATHER We can never talk.

JIM You had another fight with her, didn't you?

FATHER She just doesn't feel good.

JIM Did you sleep on the couch last night?

FATHER You heard that?

JIM I always hear. I can't sleep anymore.

FATHER Isn't that a laugh? She kicked me out! I don't care! She is shipping my mother away too.

JIM She is?

FATHER Well—so what, after all is said and done? Only someday—

JIM Someday when, Dad?

FATHER When?

JIM Yeah—when? Now?

FATHER *(Smiling)* I dropped the tray, didn't I?

Jim looks at him with sudden pity and contempt and hands the wet rag back to him.

JIM You better clean it up.

MOTHER'S VOICE What's going on out there? Are you going to talk all night or am I going to have supper? Frank?

The Father looks after Jim who wheels to his bedroom. Then the old man drops to his knees on the carpet and begins to mop up the mess.

INSIDE JIM'S ROOM
as he comes in, shuts the door and throws himself miserably on his bed. He writhes as if the pain he feels were physical. Outside, radios are heard in the night – tuned to different stations. He feels under his jacket and holds up his hand to the moonlight. There is blood on it. He reaches up and takes his alarm clock and is setting it as CAMERA GLIDES to his window and holds on the moon over the rooftops.

FULL SHOT – JUDY'S BACKYARD – MOONLIGHT
Judy stands near CAMERA looking up at the moon. The radios seem louder out here. One breaks through.

ANNOUNCER Time now for the seven o'clock news. Friends, the next time you go shopping—

VOICE OF JUDY'S FATHER *(O.S.)* Judy.

She wheels around.

LONG SHOT – THE FATHER
standing erect on back porch, silhouetted against a window.

FATHER What are you wishing for, Judy?

MEDIUM SHOT – JUDY
She hasn't moved.

JUDY *(Softly)* I wasn't wishing. I was looking at the moon.

FULL SHOT - BACKYARD
featuring the Father. We see him now as a tall and handsome man. There is something boyish and appealing about him.

FATHER *(Singing lightly)* "Man in the Moon, how came you there—Up in the sky where you are shining—Floating so high in the frosty air—? Oh, say—Man in the Moon!"—

Judy comes forward, stands below him on the step. Her look is adoring.

JUDY *(Astonished)* How did *you* know that?

FATHER We used to sing it in school. *(He smiles)* Don't look at me with such horror. They had schools in those days.

JUDY But the same song. I think it's fantastic!

FATHER We were romantic then, too—

JUDY Are you and Mom home tonight?

FATHER No, why?

JUDY Nothing, only it'd be nice to spend an evening together for a change.

FATHER With *us* old creeps? Come on, we have to eat.

JUDY *(Rising)* Daddy—

He looks at her.

JUDY Good evening.

FATHER Hi.

He turns away and goes into the house. She hesitates and then follows. Something in the mood has changed. He has neglected to hold the door for her.

This spread pages ~~44~~-50 of original script

DINING ROOM – JUDY'S HOUSE
as the Father comes to the head of the table and takes his seat. Three places are set. Judy follows. She stands above his chair, looking down at him as he drinks his tomato juice.

JUDY *(Quietly, afraid)* Didn't you forget something?

FATHER What?

Judy doesn't answer, but leans down and kisses him quickly on the lips.

FATHER *(Continuing; shocked)* What's the matter with you?

Judy freezes, frightened. He collects himself a little.

FATHER You're too old for that kind of stuff, kiddo. I thought you stopped doing that long ago.

JUDY *(Very hurt)* I didn't want to stop.

The Mother enters briskly from another part of the house —an attractive, brittle woman of thirty-five.

MOTHER Didn't want to stop what?

FATHER Nothing.

JUDY I was talking to Dad.

FATHER I didn't kiss her so it's a big thing.

MOTHER *(Calling to kitchen)* Bertha! You can serve the soufflé! *(To Father)* Fish soufflé. *(To Judy)* You don't have to stand there, darling. Drink your tomato juice.

Judy slides into her chair reluctantly and unfolds her napkin.

JUDY I guess I just don't understand anything.

FATHER I'm *tired*, Judy. I'd like to change the subject.

JUDY Why?

FATHER I'd like to, that's all. Girls your age don't do that. You need an explanation?

JUDY *(Very low)* Girls don't love their father? Since when? Since I got to be sixteen?

She half-rises to kiss him again.

FATHER Stop it now! Sit down!

Suddenly, the Father slaps her. Even as he does it he is as stunned as Judy. The Mother stops eating. She has never seen such a display and is shocked. He tries to control himself by buttering a piece of bread. There is a terrible silence into which Beau enters in his pajamas. He runs to his Father's chair, then halts—looking from face to face. The Father puts an arm around him, hugs him almost savagely.

FATHER *(Thickly)* Hi, rascal.

BEAU *(Hushed)* Hi.

Judy rises, weeping.

JUDY May I please be excused?

She starts out. The Father rises and follows after her.

FATHER *(Softly)* Hey. Hey, Glamourpuss. I'm sorry.

She leaves the room, interrupting the joke he was going to make. He turns back to the table and sits down. The Mother rises and comes to him.

FATHER I don't know what to do. All of a sudden she's a problem.

The Mother stands behind his chair. She tips his head back against her body and kneads his neck and shoulders.

MOTHER She'll outgrow it, dear. It's just the age.

BEAU *(In a sudden burst)* The atomic age!

The door slams.

MOTHER *(Kissing her husband's hair)* It's the age when nothing fits.

INSIDE JIM'S ROOM
We see him lying on his bed as before. His eyes are open. The alarm clock goes off. Jim starts as if shot, then stops the wild ringing. The time is seven-forty-five. He makes no move to leave the bed. There is a light tap on the door, then it opens and the Father is there, seen in light from the hall and still wearing the aprons.

FATHER You awake?

JIM Yes.

FATHER Listen—I took a steak out of the freezer. I thought we could have a real old-fashioned stag party—just the two of us, what do you say?

JIM I'm not hungry.

The Father turns away.

JIM Hey—I want to ask you something.

FATHER *(Happily)* Shoot, Jimbo.

JIM Suppose you knew that you had to do something that might get someone killed—Would you do it?

FATHER *(Laughing)* Is there some kind of trick answer?

JIM Suppose it was a question of honor—where you have to prove something you need to know?

FATHER What could be so important that you'd have to prove it like that? You writing a composition?

JIM What would you do, Dad?

FATHER I'd have to think about it. Let's get a little light on the subject

The Father turns on the light and looks at Jim, who is now sitting on the edge of the bed. He removes his jacket and the bloody shirt is revealed. The Father stares.

JIM Blood.

FATHER How'd that happen! What kind of trouble you in?

JIM The kind we've been talking about. Can you answer me now?

FATHER Listen—nobody should make a snap decision—This isn't something you just—we ought to consider all the pros and cons—

JIM We don't have time.

FATHER We'll make time. Where's some paper? We'll make a list and if we're still stuck then we ought to get some advice—

He goes out to the study next door. Jim rises.

JIM *(Shouting)* What *can* you do when you have to be a man?

FATHER'S VOICE What?

JIM *(At door—calling)* You going to stop me, Dad?

FATHER'S VOICE You know I never *stop* you from anything.

Jim suddenly makes his decision and now sheds his jacket for a leather one.

FATHER'S VOICE Believe me—you're at a wonderful age. In ten years you'll look back on this and wish you were a kid again—I just want to show you how foolish you are. When you're older you'll laugh at yourself for thinking this is so important—

During this, Jim has kicked off his shoes and put on his boots. Now he goes out.

UPPER HALL
Jim drops down the stairs, the Father comes into the hall, the paper in his hand.

FATHER Jim? Will you listen? You can't go out till we—Jim!

The Mother's door opens and she appears in her robe.

MOTHER What's all the excitement?

FATHER He had blood on him!

MOTHER What?

FATHER Blood! Blood! On his shirt! I *told* him I didn't think he should go out. I was going to ask you—But he went—he just—

MOTHER And you didn't stop him?

FATHER You think I could have?

He runs down the stairs.

OUTSIDE JIM'S HOUSE
The Father bursts out into the moonlight. He runs to the middle of the pavement and stops, looks up and down the street.

FATHER *(Yelling)* Jim? Stop! Jim?

Suddenly he looks down and notices that he is still wearing the apron. He rips it off and throws it down—then stares around—as if by his last gesture his son might magically return. A couple of neighbors poke their heads out. He hurries inside.

DISSOLVE TO:
THE PLATEAU – MOONLIGHT
Wind shrieks over the exposed plateau, which is several hundred yards long. It cuts into the darkness like the prow of a ship and ends in empty air. Several cars are scattered about, defining a sort of runway in the center. There are several kids present, but very little talk. Most of them belong to Buzz's group but there are few whom we have not met before. They stand in small clots, murmuring and smoking. The atmosphere is strung tightly, like the moments before a dawn attack. In b.g., near the cliff's edge, are two cars of similar make and model. They face away from CAMERA toward the edge of the plateau. There are no headlights anywhere . . . blackout conditions. MOOSE, a boy in a leather jacket and cheap yachting cap, stands guard between the cars, his back to us. His hands are on his hips. His legs are spread. Some girls drift in.

MOOSE On your way, girls.

GIRL Can't we even look?

MOOSE Nobody comes near these cars.

ANOTHER ANGLE – PLATEAU
featuring Plato as he wanders through the crowd searching for Jim. He passes Buzz's car where Buzz, Judy and the rest are eating hamburgers and drinking beer. They have all changed into fighting wardrobe.

BUZZ *(Calling out)* Hey, Chicken-Little.

Plato stops.

BUZZ Where's Toreador? He beg off?

PLATO He's not scared of you.

BUZZ *(Laughing)* Yeah? *(He spots Goon and throws his spotlight on him—dismissing Plato)* There's Goon. *(Calling to him)* You blind or something?

This spread pages **50-56** of original script

MEDIUM SHOT – GOON
as the light strikes him. He laughs.

GOON I been looking all over for you!

He starts toward the car.

MEDIUM SHOT – BUZZ
as Goon comes in to him. He is smashing his fist in the palm of his hand.

GOON What's happening, Buzz?

BUZZ You seen that adolescent type anywheres?

CRUNCH He won't show.

GOON Well, you going to wait all night? I'm getting nervous, man! We got to *do* something!

COOKIE *(Looking off)* Hey, Buzz!

BUZZ What?

COOKIE Over there.

Buzz snaps on the spotlight again and swings it off.

ANOTHER ANGLE – PLATEAU
as Jim's car enters the area, its motor whining with the strain of the hill. It stops near the guarded cars. Buzz and Goon are large in f.g. as they look off. Plato leaves.

MOOSE *(In b.g., yelling)* Douse your lights.

Jim's lights go off.

GOON Who dat?

Buzz starts toward Jim's car. Plato is there ahead of him in the glare of Buzz's spotlight.

FULL SHOT – JIM'S CAR
as Jim gets out and Plato runs to him.

JIM How'd *you* get here?

PLATO I hitched.

JIM Boy, I bet you'd go to a hanging.

PLATO It's just that I have a morbid personality. Should I leave?

JIM No, it's okay.

Buzz enters.

BUZZ Come on. Let's see what we're driving.

Jim gets out; Plato starts to follow.

BUZZ Just him.

JIM Stay there.

The two boys move away. Plato looks after them, hurt, then goes to side of Judy and stands.

DOLLY SHOT – JIM AND BUZZ
as they come forward.

BUZZ What you say your name was?

JIM Jim Stark.

BUZZ Buzz Gundersen.

JIM Hi.

BUZZ Glad to meet you.

They shake hands briefly as they walk. They come to Moose and stop.

MOOSE Got some goodies for you, Buzzie-boy.

BUZZ Where's the flashlight?

Moose produces one and hands it to Buzz, who goes to one of the guarded cars, motioning Jim to come too.

CLOSER SHOT – BUZZ, JIM AND MOOSE
seen as hood is raised, revealing their faces beneath it. Buzz explores the motor with the flashlight.

BUZZ Looks good.

MOOSE Clean as a whistle. They both got plenty breeze.

BUZZ Look good to you?

JIM Sure. It's fine.

BUZZ Okay.

He closes the hood. Group moves across to other car.

JUDY AND PLATO
The other kids are behind them. Judy looks to see that their attention isn't on her, then speaks quietly to Plato.

JUDY Is he your friend?

PLATO Yes. My *best* friend.

JUDY What's he like?

PLATO Oh, I don't know. You have to get to know him. He doesn't say much but when he does you know he means it. He's sincere.

JUDY Well, that's the main thing—don't you think so?

PLATO Maybe next summer he's going to take me hunting with him—and fishing. I want him to teach me how and I bet he won't get mad if I goof. His name's Jim.

JUDY Jim?

PLATO It's really James but he likes Jim more. *(Laughing)*

I think his mother calls him "Jamie."

JUDY Want to finish my hamburger? I only took a bite.

PLATO Okay.

FULL SHOT – GUARDED CARS
Jim is close in f.g. at wheel of his car. Buzz is beyond, at wheel of his. Both boys are gunning their engines, listening critically. Jim lets his idle.

JUDY, GOON AND GROUP
They watch in silent anticipation. Plato starts away from them.

TRAVELING SHOT – PLATO
hurrying away from group. He stops, looking off.

JIM AND BUZZ – PLATO IN DISTANCE

BUZZ Better try the doors. Jump out.

Jim opens his door

BUZZ No—quick, man! You got to break quick.

Jim shuts his door and tries again. So does Buzz. Then both boys walk forward to the edge. Neither says a word. Buzz puts his hand on Jim's shoulder.

HIGH ANGLE – THE EDGE OF THE BLUFF
Jim and Buzz are directly below us. Under them the plateau falls steeply away in a sheer drop of a hundred feet to the highway below. Across the highway is a flat area.

TWO SHOT – JIM AND BUZZ
Jim is staring below. He is beginning to perspire. He lights a cigarette. Without taking his hand from Jim's shoulder, Buzz borrows the cigarette from his lips, takes a drag and hands it back. Jim takes another puff, then tosses it into the abyss.

BUZZ *(Quietly)* This is the edge, boy. This is the end.

JIM Yeah.

BUZZ I like you, you know?

JIM Buzz? What are we doing this for?

BUZZ *(Still quiet)* We got to do *something*. Don't we?

LONG SHOT – JIM AND BUZZ – WITH PLATO IN F.G.
Jim and Buzz appear to him as two close friends. Suddenly they break and go, without speaking further, to their cars. They back up to the opposite end of the plateau, headlights dark. Plato follows them with his gaze.

GROUP SHOT – JUDY, GOON AND OTHERS
looking up as the cars glide by.

MILLIE When are we going to get *started!*

Judy goes toward where Jim and Buzz are settling into starting position.

This spread pages **56-62** of original script

MEDIUM SHOT – BUZZ
as Judy comes to him. Jim is in b.g. – looking on.

JUDY Feel okay?

BUZZ Give me some dirt.

She bends out of sight for a moment as Buzz goes on talking, then hands him the dirt. He rubs it into his palms.

BUZZ Hey, Toreador! She counts. We take off on signal. Head for the edge. The first guy who jumps—chicken! *(To Judy)* Kissie—Kissie.

She kisses him, without much interest.

BUZZ What's happening?

JUDY Good luck, Buzz.

She starts out, without kissing him again.

JIM *(Calling softly)* Judy.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM'S CAR
as Judy comes to him.

JIM Me too.

She looks at him a moment then bends, picks up dirt and hands him some. Their heads touch for an instant.

JIM Thank you.

She breaks the look and hurries away.

LONG SHOT – THE CARS
They are facing us. Judy is approaching. When she gets near CAMERA, she stops and turns back to face them.

BUZZ Hit your lights!

Suddenly the headlights of both cars come on full.

REVERSE SHOT – JUDY
Her arm shields her eyes from the glare. Behind her we see the other kids hurrying along toward the edge of the bluff. The SOUND of motors revving then dying and revving again.

INSIDE – JIM'S CAR
Jim grips the wheel firmly, relaxes his hands to rub his palms together and crack his knuckles. He grips the wheel again. Steps on the accelerator, winding his engine into a roar. He lets up, looks tensely at –

BUZZ – IN HIS CAR
His chin juts forward. He lets go of the wheel, starts to comb his hair.

SLOW PAN SHOT – SPECTATORS
staring off at the lights. A boy has his arms around the girl in front of him, his cheek against hers. Both are looking off. Some of the kids smoke. All are involved in the blasting of engines.

PLATO
Among the spectators near edge of the bluff. He is chewing his lip. Suddenly he spits. CAMERA PANS DOWN to show that the fingers of both hands are tightly crossed.

CLOSE SHOT – JUDY
staring tensely into the beam. Suddenly she raises her hands high above her head. She tries to yell.

JUDY Should I count?

But her voice is lost in the roaring.

CLOSE SHOT – JIM
sweating it out. He leans forward, squinting, ready.

CLOSE SHOT – BUZZ
He puts his comb between his teeth and clamps it hard. He settles himself for the run.

LONG SHOT – PLATEAU
The cars are in close, seen from the rear. Judy is a small distant figure, arms stretched high. The exhaust blasts. Now she drops her arms. The cars leap ahead.

MEDIUM SHOT – JUDY
She whirls to see the cars snap by, then begins running up the center of the plateau between the lines of spectators.

FULL SHOT – SPECTATORS
SHOOTING OVER their shoulders as the cars approach and scream past.

PIT SHOT – CARS
As they approach, gaining speed, and thunder over the CAMERA.

INSIDE JIM'S CAR (PROCESS)
He is tense.

INSIDE BUZZ'S CAR (PROCESS)
His hands hard on the wheel. The comb is still between his teeth. He begins edging toward the door on his left.

MOVING CLOSE SHOT – JUDY
biting hard on her finger, as she runs forward.

CLOSE SHOT – PLATO
Both hands cover his mouth. The fingers are still crossed.

INSIDE JIM'S CAR (PROCESS)
As he edges to his left. He is driving with one hand. He opens the door, gets set for his jump.

INSIDE BUZZ'S CAR (PROCESS)
He reaches for the door handle and misses. As he raises his arm to reach again, the strap of his windbreaker sleeve slips over the handle. He looks down in panic, then back at the drop ahead. He tugs but cannot get the sleeve loose.

CLOSE-UP – PLATO
staring. He shuts his eyes tight and keeps them shut.

INSIDE JIM'S CAR (PROCESS)
His face is soaked. He looks once toward Buzz – then ahead. His eyes widen in fear. He shoves left and flings himself forward, and out.

OUTSIDE JIM'S CAR
as he sprawls forward – into CAMERA.

INSIDE BUZZ'S CAR (PROCESS)
Buzz leans way forward now. He seems to rise in his seat. His mouth opens and the comb falls out.

FULL SHOT – SPECTATORS
staring in disbelief. Suddenly, a youth ducks his face into the neck of his girlfriend so he cannot see. At the same instant:

CROWD *(In a single breath)* Oh!

REAR VIEW – EDGE OF THE BLUFF
as the two cars go over. There is NO human SOUND.

CLOSE SHOT – JIM
as he stops rolling.

BUZZ'S CAR – IN FLIGHT (PROCESS EFFECT)
The car soars through the night, the vehicle of a terrible journey.

MEDIUM SHOT – BUZZ (PROCESS)
Surprise has gone. He rides lightly on the thrill of his last moment – then suddenly, his face twists in a spasm of protest and loss.

THE KIDS
staring at his flight.

JIM
unaware of the disaster – glad he made it.

LOW ANGLE – EDGE OF THE BLUFF
With headlights blazing, both cars dive down. Buzz's car strikes a projection and bursts into flame. As if fired from a catapult, it bounces forward and over our heads.

MEDIUM SHOT – JUDY
standing frozen as the spectators shove past and around her.

WIDE ANGLE – EDGE OF THE BLUFF
as spectators swarm to it, stand looking down.

JIM
On hands and knees, trying to rise. Legs rush by him, knock him onto his face.

REVERSE SHOT – STEEP ANGLE – FROM BLUFF
Both cars leap completely over the highway, bounce high, crash forward into the flat area beyond.

FULL SHOT – HIGHWAY
seen through the fire. Cars are stopping. Squeal of brakes. Horns. Some passengers rush forward from their vehicles and peer into the flames.

MEDIUM SHOT – STOPPED CAR
The passenger, probably a father, snaps on his spotlight and swings it upward toward the bluff.

TRAVELING SHOT – JIM AT EDGE OF BLUFF
seen pushing through spectators revealed in the spotlight from below.

JIM *(In harsh whisper)* Where's Buzz! Where's Buzz!

TRAVELING SHOT – PLATO
working his way through the crowd.

PLATO *(Calling)* Jim! Jim!

CRUNCH
Crunch looks up as he hears Jim's repeated cry. Jim enters behind him, continuing blindly on his way. Crunch seizes him and thrusts him forward.

CRUNCH *(Tight fury)* Down there! Down there is Buzz!

Crunch tries to fling him over the edge. Jim wheels, sinks down behind Goon and retches.

CLOSE SHOT – MOOSE
turning to Jim in fury.

CLOSE SHOT – GOON
looking at Jim. He spits.

REAR VIEW – SPECTATORS
A siren wail approaches below. The kids wheel and scatter, panicking past the CAMERA.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM
seen between legs of hurrying kids. The siren and the pounding of their feet on the harsh turf. Jim is sitting at the edge of the bluff. Plato rushes in, stops short as he sees him.

PLATO Come on, Jim! We got to get out of here!

Jim doesn't move. Plato grabs his arm and yanks.

PLATO Get up! Get up! Come on!

Jim stands. Plato pushes him.

They start away. Plato still pushing from behind.

MEDIUM SHOT – JUDY
She is standing alone in the wind on the emptying plateau. Jim and Plato move past in the distance. Jim sees her and stops.

CLOSE SHOT – JUDY
She is shuddering violently but there are no tears. She seems not to see or hear or be aware of anything around her.

FULL SHOT – JIM AND PLATO
watching Judy. Jim moves toward her, CAMERA PANNING with him and leaving Plato behind.

Jim stands before Judy until she notices him. He shakes his head for all the sorrow he feels, but no words come. Tentatively, he offers her his hand. After a moment, she takes it. She knows only that help is being offered and that she will accept it with trust. Jim leads her away toward the car.

DISSOLVE TO:
HIGH SHOT – JIM'S CAR – NIGHT
going through the city.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:
HIGH SHOT – JIM'S CAR – NIGHT
going along freeway.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:
HIGH LONG SHOT – JIM'S STREET – NIGHT
There is no movement anywhere. In the houses bordering the street a few lights still burn. Jim's car approaches out of distance and slows when it reaches the corner.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM'S CAR
as it slows and stops. Jim, Judy and Plato in the front seat as before. Judy has the door open before the car even stops. She is shaking, agitated and withdrawn.

JUDY *(Hardly audible)* This is fine—Here—

JIM *(Gently)* Can't I drive you home? Where do—

JUDY No—here—thank you—Good night.

She gets out and starts away, leaving door open.

JIM *(Calling quietly)* Judy. Will you be okay?

JUDY *(Turning to look at him)* Yes. Yes.

JIM *(Almost to himself)* Why do we have to hurt?

Plato looks at him. Judy hesitates. Jim raises a hand to her in a shy farewell. She smiles vaguely, then hurries around the corner, away from them. Plato bangs the door shut and Jim drives on.

ALLEY
As Judy hurries along it toward the gate of her backyard, the sound of a car down the alley makes her turn. She is shuddering.

NEAR JIM'S BACKYARD (ALLEY)
as Jim drives his car toward the garage and stops. He and Plato get out. A siren wails.

JIM I got to go in. You better—

Plato grins and looks down.

JIM What's the matter? You better get home, too. You want my car? You can pick me up in the—hey—

He touches Plato.

JIM Hey—what?

PLATO Nothing—only my mother's in Hawaii—

He begins to break up. Jim smiles too.

JIM What you laughing about?

PLATO I don't know. I can't stop.

JIM *(Laughing)* She's in Hawaii? What's she—

PLATO *(Laughing)* Yeah!

JIM *(Laughing)* What's she doing there? She shakin' it at Waikiki!

PLATO Quit!

JIM *(Laughing)* She—she going to boing boing with the pineapples?

Plato nods, howling. Both are hysterical. Tears stream down from their eyes as their laughter continues through:

PLATO Quit! Please! Buzz!

JIM Poor Buzz! He's dead! He blew up, didn't he?

PLATO We shouldn't laugh.

JIM I'm not laughing.

PLATO Shut up!

They fall onto each other.

JIM I'm not laughing!

Silence. After a moment, Jim breaks away. He is crying.

JIM I got to get in.

PLATO Come home with me. Please. I mean my dad's not—nobody's home at my house—and I'm not tired, are you? I don't have many—people I can talk to.

JIM Who has?

PLATO If you want to come it wouldn't be any trouble. We could talk and then in the morning we could have breakfast—

JIM Look—

PLATO *(Suddenly, pleasantly)* G'night. See you tomorrow.

JIM *(Pausing at door)* Yeah.

LONG SHOT – JIM AND PLATO
seen from Judy's angle, Judy featured. She sees Plato turn and walk up the lane to the street. She sees Jim hesitate then go into his kitchen door. She looks after him a moment, then starts across her own backyard, and into her house.

HALLWAY – JUDY'S HOUSE
Three doors open onto it: one is closed – this is Judy's room; another, leading into Beau's room, is open, but the room beyond is dark; the third, also open, reveals the bedroom of Judy's parents. As Judy comes into the hallway, the parents, who are reading in their beds, look up. Judy hesitates, then starts toward her own room.

BEAU'S VOICE *(Quietly)* Hello, little cute sister.

Judy stops. Beau appears at his door in white pajamas, a small ghost. Judy looks at him.

BEAU Hello, darling, baby-pie, glamourpuss, sweetie—

Judy touches Beau's head and tries to smile.

FATHER *(Calling from his bed)* Beau! You belong in bed!

Beau flees. Judy turns without another glance at her parents, and opens the door of her room.

INSIDE BEDROOM OF JUDY'S PARENTS
As Judy slams her bedroom door O.S., the Father reacts. Perhaps he wishes she had given him a chance to say

This spread pages **62-71** of original script

good night. The Mother, who uses reading glasses, looks up at the slam. Then she looks over at her husband, shrugs when she catches his gaze, and goes back to her magazine.

INSIDE JIM'S KITCHEN
He stands undecided in the dark. He goes to the refrigerator, takes out a half-filled bottle of milk, exits through the swinging door, into the rest of the house.

INSIDE JIM'S LIVING ROOM
The television is on, but only a hum comes from it, and the screen is a flickering gray. The Father sits lumpily in a chair by the fireplace, still dressed but with his collar open. The sound of Jim's step in the dining room makes him open his eyes. Fear of facing his son makes him shut them again. The boy comes in, the milk still in his hand. Seeing his Father there, he stops short – his impulse is to flee. Instead, he comes in and looks down at the sleeping man whose eyelids, fluttering in the Father's masquerade of sleep, make him seem to be having a dream. Jim is torn between his desire to leave and his need to speak. He turns off the television quietly, then lies down on the couch across the way. He mumbles the things he would say to his Father and the answers he feels he would get. The old man opens his eyes once, sees the boy there, head hanging upside down from the couch. Then he shuts them again.

UPSIDE DOWN LONG SHOT – ROOM (JIM'S VIEWPOINT)
Suddenly, inverted in his vision, the Mother appears at the head of the stairs, in bathrobe and nightgown. She pauses a moment, then runs down crying:

MOTHER He's home! You're home! You're all right!

The CAMERA RIGHTS itself suddenly.

JIM
as he completes his turn, pulling his head up and sitting.

FATHER
as he pretends to awaken with a start.

FULL SHOT – ROOM
as the Mother hurries to Jim, holds him, inspects him, kisses him.

MOTHER What happened, darling? We were so worried.

FATHER *(Rising)* Want some water?

JIM *(Holding up milk)* No.

MOTHER I was going to take a sleeping pill, but I wouldn't until I knew you were home.

JIM I have to talk to someone, Mom. I have to talk to you both.

FATHER Go ahead. We want to hear.

JIM See, I'm in terrible trouble—

MOTHER Oh, Jim—

JIM You know that big high bluff near Millertown Junction?

FATHER Sure—there was a bad accident there. They showed the pictures on—

JIM I was in it.

MOTHER How!

JIM I just—It doesn't matter how. I was driving a stolen car—

MOTHER Do you *enjoy* doing this to me or what—

JIM Mom—I'm not—

MOTHER And you wanted him to make a *list!*

FATHER Will you let him tell it!

JIM She doesn't care! She never wants to hear.

MOTHER I guess when I nearly died giving birth to you—that shows how much I don't care!

FATHER Will you all just relax now?

MOTHER I'm sorry, Jim.

JIM They called me chicken—you ever hear of that? That's what they called me. So I had to go. I got in one of these cars and a boy called Buzz got in the other. We had to drive fast and jump before we went over the bluff. I got out okay but Buzz was killed.

FATHER Good Lord!

JIM I can't keep it to myself anymore—

FATHER Well, just get it off your chest, son. Don't spare us the details.

JIM That's not what I mean. I've never done anything right. I've been going around with my head in a sling for years. See—You probably don't know this, but I'm not too happy . . . *(He shakes his head, fighting tears)* I probably made you unhappy too. And I don't want to drag you into this but I can't help it. I don't think I can prove anything by going around pretending I'm tough anymore. I mean so maybe you look like one thing but you still feel like another.

FATHER You're absolutely right!

JIM The main thing is—you have to find someone you can live with and that only someone is yourself.

Father hands Jim a handkerchief—Jim blows his nose.

JIM You move here and you move there. I've never lived any place where you let me be happy for one second. Now I have to—that's all.

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FATHER *(Putting his arm around the boy)* What do you want to do, son?

JIM One thing is—see—when I think of that kid's parents! Maybe there's something we can do. I don't know—Maybe they're poor. I think we should go and see them.

FATHER That's a fine thought, Jim.

JIM It's not *fine*. It's just necessary. And the other thing is—and this is why I have to tell you, because you are going to be involved—I want to go to the police and tell them I was mixed up in this thing tonight.

FATHER You do? *(Silence)* Did anyone see you there? I mean did they get your license number or anything?

JIM I don't think so—

FATHER Well—

MOTHER What about the other boys—Do you think they'll go to the police?

JIM What's that got to do with it?

MOTHER Why should you be the only—

FATHER Look, Jim. Far be it from me to tell you what to do, but there's—

MOTHER Are you going to preach now? Are we going to have a sermon?

FATHER I'm just explaining what *you* mean! You can't be an idealist all your life! Nobody thanks you for sticking your neck out!

JIM Except yourself!

FATHER Will you wait a minute?

JIM You don't want me to go.

MOTHER No.

FATHER Joan—Give him a chance!

MOTHER No! I don't want him to go to the police! There were other people and why should he be the only one involved!

JIM But I am involved! I was in a *crime*, Mom! A boy was *killed!* You don't get out of that by pretending it didn't happen!

FATHER You know you did wrong. That's the main thing, isn't it?

JIM No! It's nothing! Just nothing! You always told me to tell the truth. You think you can just turn that off.

MOTHER He's not saying that! He's saying don't volunteer!

JIM Just tell a little white lie?

FATHER You'll learn as you get a little older, Jim.

JIM I don't want to learn that!

MOTHER Well, it doesn't matter anyhow—because we're moving.

JIM No! You're not tearing me loose anymore.

FATHER This is news to me! Why are we moving?

MOTHER Do I have to spell it out?

JIM You're not going to use me as an excuse again, Mom. Every time you can't face yourself you want to move and you say it's because of me or the neighborhood or some other phony excuse. Now I want to do one thing right and I'm not letting you run away. *(Silence)* Dad?

FATHER Son—this is all happening so fast—

JIM You better give me something, Dad. You better *give* me something fast. *(He stops as he sees the emptiness in them)* Mom?

MOTHER Jimmy , you're very young—and a foolish decision now could wreck your whole life.

JIM Dad—aren't you going to stand up for me?

The Father is mute, helpless . . . Suddenly, Jim screams.

JIM *Dad?*

He leaps at his Father, dragging him to his feet, hands at the man's throat.

MOTHER *Stop it! You'll kill him! Jim! Do you want to kill your father?*

Suddenly Jim loosens his hands and rises. He looks swiftly at each of them—moves a few steps toward the door, looks back at them again—then rushes out of the house. The parents stand frozen for a moment. A siren has been approaching and now it grows louder:

MOTHER Frank—

FATHER Don't say a word to me!

MOTHER We did something wrong.

FATHER Just don't say anything. Not another word. *(He turns on her)* And get this through your head—we're staying. If he wants to make a stand—that's our stand too!

DISSOLVE TO:
OUTSIDE PRECINCT STATION – NIGHT
Jim's car comes to a stop at the curb. Jim gets out and approaches the flight of steps leading up to the entrance. A bare bulb on either side is the only illumination. As he mounts the first step, the double doors above him swing open revealing several people. Jim stops short. So do they.

LOW ANGLE – CRUNCH, MOOSE AND THEIR PARENTS
Jim's back in f.g. The boys stare down at him.

HIGH ANGLE – JIM (FROM THE BOYS' POINT OF VIEW)

as he stares up at them. Moose's Father takes his arm and starts him down the stairs, the others moving too.

MOOSE Let go of me—

MOOSE'S FATHER You want a good crack in the mouth?

Jim starts forward up the steps. Crunch grabs him.

CRUNCH This place appeal to you or something?

They move down the steps as Jim breaks away and continues up. He goes through the doors.

INSIDE DOORS
as Jim comes through and stops. He looks back through the glass. We see the group reach the curb where their cars are parked. There is a brief discussion which we cannot hear, then Crunch and Moose move off to Moose's car. Jim turns back. He looks worried as he PASSES CAMERA.

MEDIUM SHOT – CRUNCH AND MOOSE
They stop at Moose's car and look back at the entrance. The parents are seen beyond them, getting into their cars. Crunch is near tears with anger.

CRUNCH What's he going to pull—

MOOSE Nothing, Crunch. They picked him up like the rest of—

CRUNCH You see any cops?

MOOSE'S FATHER *(Yelling)* You monsters start home. We're going to—

MOOSE Yeah. Yeah.

MOOSE'S FATHER We're following you, so better get there.

CRUNCH *You see any cops?*

MOOSE No—

CRUNCH He's going to cheese, I tell you. *Nobody* arrested him!

MOOSE I think I should go home.

CRUNCH No. We're going to bring him down.

MOOSE Crunch—my father's—You going to kill him?

CRUNCH *(Crying)* You clean out your head! Come on!

Crunch gets into the car. Moose follows. They gun the motor and throw the car into a sharp U-turn. Moose's Father jumps into his car. He steps on the starter but nothing happens—just the empty whirring, over and over. Finally it starts, but the boys have gone.

INSIDE – PRECINCT STATION – JUVENILE DIVISION
A desk SERGEANT is writing in the record book. Facing him across the desk and handcuffed to an OFFICER is a young HOODLUM, very different in appearance from the kids we have met – a typical duck-tail "cat."

SERGEANT *(Spelling)* W—O—J—T—what?

HOODLUM O—W—I—C—Z. Wojtowicz. What's the matter, man? That's the craziest name in town! It swings!

JIM Excuse me—but—You know where I can find—I mean I don't remember his last name—

SERGEANT Look—can't you see I'm writing?

HOODLUM *(Combing his duck-tail)* Man, this cat never stops. He just keeps going like Big Jay at a session!

OFFICER Shut up.

HOODLUM He's writing a book about me—

SERGEANT What I could write about you they wouldn't print.

JIM I think his first name's Ray—I have to see him. It's very important.

SERGEANT What's the charge?

OFFICER Assault with a deadly weapon.

JIM Listen—

SERGEANT *(Annoyed)* He's not here. He's not at Juvenile Hall. I don't know where he is. He's out on call and he'll be out all night. How old are you?

JIM My parents know I'm out. They know I'm here.

SERGEANT Come back tomorrow.

JIM I'll wait for him.

SERGEANT Why don't you come back tomorrow, son? *(To hoodlum)* Ever been booked before?

Jim turns away angrily, looks back once, then hurries out.

DISSOLVE TO:
TRAVELING SHOT – PLATO
He is coming up the walk to his house. When Plato has come a few feet, somebody whistles. Plato and CAMERA stop. Short, quiet whistles come from the boxwood and shrubbery on both sides of the walk. Plato turns and starts to run, CAMERA FOLLOWING. He gets to his door, tries the key, but in his panic it will not go into the lock. Suddenly a hand reaches in and jerks him around. Crunch stands above him. Goon closes in from the other side. All very tense and hotted up!

PLATO What do you want?

CRUNCH You know what we want. We want your friend.

GOON We got eyes for him.

PLATO Listen, you guys ought to go home. The cops are

cruising every—

GOON Where does he live?

Plato reaches up swiftly and rings the bell. Goon grabs him. Crunch cracks him.

CRUNCH You better tell us and I'm not kidding.

PLATO My old man's got a gun.

GOON His old man's got a gun. What do you think of that! *(He drives a hard blow at Plato's belly)* Your friend talked—*(He belts him again)* Now *you* talk! Talk!

They search him—find his address book. The door opens and the Negro Woman is there. Crunch sends Plato spinning into the house past her. He falls.

NEGRO WOMAN *(Yelling)* What you doing! What you doing to him! You clear out of here 'fore I call the police! *(She swings at Crunch who faces her, challenging)* Clear out. Go on! Go on now!

MOOSE Let's go, Crunch.

They turn and move PAST CAMERA. Plato gets up off the floor. We hear the sound of a heap starting. The Negro Woman closes the door.

INSIDE PLATO'S FOYER
as Negro Woman bolts the door.

NEGRO WOMAN Why you like to mix with bad boys like that? Why you get in trouble all the—

PLATO I have to go out. I have to warn him.

He starts up the stairs. She follows him heavily.

NEGRO WOMAN You not going anywhere! You staying home while your mama's away.

BEDROOM OF PLATO'S MOTHER
a lacy affair with imported dolls on the pillows. Plato rushes in, opens the drawer of the night-table and pulls out a gun. He checks to see that it is loaded. The Negro Woman appears in the door and stares at him, turns on the light which illuminates the bed-lamp.

NEGRO WOMAN John! What you doing with that! You leave that be! Put it down before you hurt yourself. Hear me?

But Plato moves past her and out of the room. She turns after him.

NEGRO WOMAN John! You stay *home*! John! John!

The slam of a door is heard below.

DISSOLVE TO:
OUTDOOR TELEPHONE BOOTH (LIMBO)
Jim in a sweat, finishes dialing.

JIM Hello. Hello, is Judy there?

BEDROOM OF JUDY'S PARENTS
Through an open door we hear a radio playing – a late disc-jockey show for teenagers in which numbers are dedicated by request. Judy's Mother and Father are in bed, Father has phone in his hand.

FATHER Who wants her? Who? Jim who? Never heard of you.

He hangs up the phone, looks at his wife. She rolls over in bed. The Father turns off the bed lamp, then sits up, worried, in the dark.

JUDY'S BEDROOM
It is her radio we have heard. She turns off light, opens the door a crack, and looks out toward her parents' room.

DISSOLVE TO:
FULL SHOT – JIM'S BACKYARD – NIGHT
Jim's car drives up to the garage and stops. The radio is still on, tuned to the same disc-jockey show. A number is ending as he starts to climb out. He pulls a container of milk from a paper bag, unfastens the lid and starts to drink, but stops dead as he hears:

ANNOUNCER Coming up now another request—this time from the boys down at Anna's Pizza Paradise—A new arrangement of a great oldie in rhythm and blues. Jim, this is dedicated to you—from Buzz.

Jim stares at the radio, then turns it off—but the number continues more distantly from another radio nearby. He looks for its source, puzzled.

LONG SHOT – JUDY'S WINDOW – SEEN FROM JIM'S POINT OF VIEW
It is in a house across the alley separating their backyards. Jim rises into SHOT as the silhouette of Judy opens the window, heightening the sound of the music.

INSIDE JUDY'S ROOM
She stands at her window, looking out. The radio is on her desk, just below the sill. Now she snaps it off, takes a polo coat from her closet and runs from the room.

FULL SHOT – ALLEY
as Jim comes in from his backyard and stands by an ash-can against the alley wall. He takes another drink from the container. Judy comes through a gate several yards away.

JIM *(Quietly)* I'm here. *(Judy stops)*

JUDY Hello, Jamie—

JIM Jamie! Where'd you get that?

JUDY How long have you known Plato?

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Jim smiles a little, shakes his head.

JIM This morning. You were looking for me, weren't you?

JUDY *(A small voice)* No—I was just—I wondered who was down here.

JIM I tried to call you before.

JUDY I thought so.

JIM Want some milk? *(Judy comes forward)* That's all I can do when I'm nervous. Drink milk. Here—have a slug.

She shakes her head. He takes a sip.

JUDY Did you hear the radio?

JIM You know I did.

She looks down.

JIM I guess you're pretty upset?

JUDY I'm numb.

JIM You know what I did before? I laughed. I could have shot myself—I don't know what gets into me.

JUDY It's the tension.

JIM I laughed when my aunt died, too. *(He sits on a garbage can. There is a box below him)* Sit down. Come on.

Judy sits.

JIM She was a big fat lady, you know?

JUDY My aunt's fat, too.

JIM *(Laughing)* Yeah? We have something in common.

JUDY What happened to her?

JIM Nothing. You cold or something?

JUDY Even if I'm near a fire, I'm cold. I can't stop shaking.

JIM Let me rub your hand.

JUDY It's all right.

JIM No, come on. I'm warm-blooded. Feel my face?

She does—quickly.

JIM See?

JUDY It's warm.

Jim takes her hand now and starts to chafe it between his.

JIM You know, if you hadn't come out I was just going to keep sitting here till you did.

JUDY *Why?*

JIM You're still shaking. The first time I saw Plato he was shaking, too.

JUDY I guess just about everybody's cold.

JIM I swear, sometimes, you just want to hold onto somebody! Judy, what am I going to do? I can't go home again.

JUDY Neither can I.

JIM No? Why not?

No answer.

JIM You know something? I never figured I'd live to see eighteen. Isn't that dumb?

JUDY No.

JIM Each day I'd look in the mirror and I'd say, "What? You still here?" Man!

They laugh a little.

JIM Hey! You smiled!

She shakes her head—beginning to warm to him.

JIM Like even today. I woke up this morning, you know. And the sun was shining and everything was nice. Then the first thing that happens is I see you and I thought this is going to be one terrific day so you better live it up, boy, 'cause tomorrow maybe you'll be nothing.

JUDY I'm sorry I treated you mean today. You shouldn't believe what I say when I'm with the kids. Nobody acts sincere.

JIM Why'd you get mixed up with them? You don't have to prove anything.

JUDY If you knew me you wouldn't say that.

JIM I don't think you trust anybody, do you?

JUDY Why?

JIM The way you touched my face. What happened?

JUDY *(She looks at him)* Have you *ever* gone with anyone who—

JIM Sure. Lots of times.

JUDY So have I. But I've never been in love with the person. Isn't that awful?

JIM *(Smiling)* Awful? It's just lonely. It's the loneliest time, Judy.

She looks up. He kisses her forehead.

JUDY Why did you do that?

JIM I felt like it.

JUDY When you said we hurt people before—I don't want to. I don't want to hurt anyone, Jimmy.

JIM I know.

He kisses her forehead again.

JUDY Your lips are soft when you kiss.

Judy rises.

JIM Where you going?

JUDY I don't know but we can't stay here.

JIM Why?

JUDY They'll be looking for you.

JIM They saw where I jumped! I didn't chicken! What do I have to do—kill myself?

JUDY It doesn't matter to them.

JIM Judy—where can we go?

They look at each other, frightened.

JIM Listen! I *know* a place! Plato showed me before. *(He rises)* Would you go with me?

She hesitates.

JIM You can trust me, Judy.

JUDY I feel as if I'm walking underwater.

They start out.

DISSOLVE TO:
INSIDE BATHROOM – JIM'S HOUSE
The water is running in the sink and Jim's Father is fixing a stomach settler. Gradually, he grows aware of a heavy pounding which insinuates itself above the splash of water. The Father pauses, then turns off the tap. The pounding continues. Jim's Mother appears at the bathroom door. She is seen in the mirror tying her robe.

MOTHER Frank? I'm frightened.

FATHER What's the pounding?

MOTHER I don't know. First I thought it was Jim but—

FATHER He's home. I heard the car.

MOTHER Are you going down there?

FATHER Look—just relax, will you?

The pounding ceases.

FATHER See? It stopped.

MOTHER I still think you should go down.

He goes out of the bathroom into the hall.

FOYER – JIM'S HOUSE
as the Father comes down the stairs, turning on the light as he comes. He reaches the door and pauses. The Mother stops midway down the stairs.

FATHER *(Through the door)* Who's there? *(Silence)* Anyone there?

MOTHER *(Low; at balustrade)* Open it.

The Father opens the door and looks up sharply.

CLOSE SHOT – DOOR
Father's head in f.g. as he stares at it. Nailed to the door by its outstretched wings, its head hanging in an attitude of crucifixion, is the freshly killed carcass of a chicken. Low whistles are heard from outside. The Father, frightened, looks out into the night.

FULL SHOT – FRONT LAWN AND STREET
SHOOTING over the Father's head. The whistling continues.

FATHER *(Hoarsely)* Who's out there?

VOICE Where's your son?

FATHER What?

ANOTHER VOICE Where's your baby boy gone to, Daddy? We want him.

Suddenly the Father slams the door and rushes past us into the house.

FULL SHOT – FOYER
as the Father rushes to the bottom of the stairs.

FATHER Look in his room!

The Mother disappears.

FATHER Jim! Jim!

The Father dashes into the living room, then into the hall again and down through the kitchen door.

BACKYARD
as the Father comes out. He closes the door quietly and calls in a low voice:

FATHER Son?

He stares around the yard, then hurries to the garage. Jim's car is missing. He looks up suddenly.

REVERSE SHOT – JUDY'S FATHER
seen across the alley wall. He is standing in his own backyard.

JUDY'S FATHER Is anything wrong? I'm your neighbor.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM'S FATHER
He smiles feebly.

JIM'S FATHER Oh, no, thanks. I just wanted to—to be sure my garage was closed.

Jim's Father closes his garage door and walks back toward his house.

JIM'S MOTHER'S VOICE Is he there?

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JIM'S FATHER No, honey. No, he's not here.

He starts for the house again after a quick look in the direction of Judy's Father.

FULL SHOT – JUDY'S BACKYARD
Judy's Father watches Mr. Stark disappear, then . . .

JUDY'S FATHER *(Softly)* Judy?

FULL SHOT – STREET – IN FRONT OF JIM'S HOUSE
A cab drives up. Plato jumps out.

PLATO *(To cab driver)* Wait for me.

He runs past the house toward the backyard.

FULL SHOT – JIM'S BACKYARD
as Plato runs in. He looks about, wondering what to do, glances up at the dark windows.

PLATO *(Softly)* Jim? Jim?

Quickly, he turns and lifts the garage door. He sees that Jim's car has gone. The kitchen door opens and Jim's Father comes out.

FATHER What are you doing?

PLATO Nothing. I was just—Good night.

He flies out of the backyard.

FATHER *Who are you?*

DISSOLVE TO:
SPLIT-SCREEN MONTAGE
It begins with a telephone ringing alone in the corner of the screen. As CAMERA MOVES BACK we see that the phone is in an office at Juvenile Hall. Ray is standing by, trying to make sense out of the incoming reports.

The other part of the screen lights up and becomes:

1. BEDROOM OF PLATO'S MOTHER
where the Negro Woman is speaking hysterically into the phone.

2. KITCHEN OF MOOSE'S FATHER
where this man, in his undershirt now, is casually phoning in the details of his son's escape.

3. BEDROOM OF JUDY'S PARENTS
The Father is on the phone. Beau has awakened and is crying. His Mother tries to divert him.

4. JIM'S BEDROOM
Jim's Father sits disconsolately on the bed, the phone in his hand. He is talking earnestly.

During this, the sound of the telephone ringing has increased to become the sound of many and this has been submerged in a deep rising riot of sirens whose wail mounts higher and higher until:

DISSOLVE TO:
FULL SHOT – PLANETARIUM – MOONLIGHT – NIGHT
A lone siren wails in the distance. Aside from this, all is very still. CAMERA PANS PAST the dome and settles on an isolated mansion set high on a hill nearby. Stone balustrades drop down to sunken gardens where the grass has gone to seed around a waterless fountain.

CLOSER SHOT – MANSION – NIGHT
A Mediterranean villa with a large domed solarium which is connected to the main building by a low, enclosed arcade. A crash and the falling of splintered glass is heard.

LONG SHOT – PROMENADE
SHOOTING THROUGH pillars of the main entrance portico, down the long promenade outside arcade. Two figures, seen in the distance, are disappearing through a window. CAMERA TRUCKS DOWN promenade until it reaches a broken window through which Jim is just disappearing. When he gets inside, he reaches back and takes his leather jacket, which has been spread out on the sill to protect them from splinters, shakes it out and puts it on. Running footsteps are heard approaching. Jim looks out nervously. Plato bursts in, out of breath.

PLATO Jim!

JIM Who's that?

PLATO It's me!

JIM How'd you find me? What's happening?

PLATO They're looking for you!—

JIM Yeah?

PLATO Everybody! Crunch and Goon and everybody! I think they're going to kill you.

JIM We know.

PLATO They think you told the police on them. They—who's in there?

JIM Judy.

PLATO Help me in!

Jim gives Plato a hand over the windowsill.

INSIDE ARCADE
Jim and Judy are seen in an entering shaft of moonlight. Plato hits the floor and disappears into darkness.

JIM Hey, where'd you go?

PLATO I'm here. Shut up.

JIM Come out come out wherever you are!

PLATO Shut up. Are you nuts?

JIM No. I'm scared.

A match flares and lights a candle on an antique Spanish candelabra. Plato is revealed bending over it. He lights the other candles through the following:

PLATO We're safe here. I hope. *(He holds the candelabra)* What do you think?

JIM *(Gazing around)* Wow! Well now-there-then!

His wonderment is justified. The floor of the arcade is marble and there are marble benches and neo-Roman busts lining the walls.

PLATO Isn't it crazy?

JIM Wowee ow wow! Let's take it for the summer.

JUDY Oh, Jim!

JIM No—come on. Should we rent or are we in a buying mood, dear?

JUDY *(Laughing)* You decide, darling. Remember our budget.

PLATO Don't give it a thought. Only three million dollars a month!

JUDY Oh, we can manage that! I'll scrimp and save and work my fingers to the bone . . .

JIM Why don't we just rent it for the season?

JUDY You see, we've just—oh *you* tell him, darling. I'm so embarrassed I could die!

JIM We're—we're newlyweds.

JUDY There's just one thing. What about—

PLATO Children? Well, we really don't encourage them. They're so noisy and troublesome, don't you agree?

JUDY Yes. And so terribly annoying when they cry. I just don't know what to do when they cry, do you, dear?

JIM Of course. Drown them like puppies.

JUDY See, we're very modern.

PLATO Shall I show you the nursery? It's far away from the rest of the house. If you have children—Oh, I hate the word!—or if you decide to adopt one—they can carry on and you'll never even notice. In fact, if you lock them in you never have to see them again, much less talk to them.

JUDY *Talk* to them! Heavens!

JIM Nobody *talks* to children! They just tell them one thing and mean another.

PLATO It's wonderful that you understand so well—and so young, too! You know the most wonderful feature about the nursery?

JIM What?

PLATO There's only one key.

JIM We'll take it!

PLATO Come on!

Plato leads them away from us down the arcade, the candelabra casting wild shadows on the walls. They are laughing as they disappear through the glass doors at the end and their laughter echoes stonily.

DISSOLVE TO:
MEDIUM SHOT – A STREET AND AN ALLEY
seen through the windshield of a police car. Its radio is on low. Two officers are in the front seat. One of them drinks coffee from a container. Suddenly, Moose's heap moves past on the street ahead. In it are Moose, Goon and Crunch.

FULL SHOT – THE STREET
as Moose's heap continues up the empty street. The police car slides out of the alley where it has been concealed, and follows at a distance. Its headlights are off.

CLOSE SHOT – CRUNCH, GOON AND MOOSE (PROCESS)
They are in the front seat of Moose's heap.

MOOSE What time is it?

CRUNCH Hang loose. We got all night.

MOOSE That maid saw us. She could identify us, too.

CRUNCH You still want to go home, Moose?

MOOSE No.

CRUNCH Then shut your mouth before your guts run out!

GOON *What* guts?

DISSOLVE TO:
INSIDE GLASS SOLARIUM
A swimming pool lies at the center. There is no water in it. Framing the pool is a flagstone walk with marble benches spotted here and there. The great glass room had once been planted thickly with tropical foliage. But now what palms and lianas remain are withered and dead from lack of care. At the edge of the pool, near the deep end, a blanket has been spread and a candelabra burns upon it. In its mysterious light, our three kids are revealed: Jim, bouncing precariously at the end of the diving board; Judy, on the blanket nearby; Plato, on the

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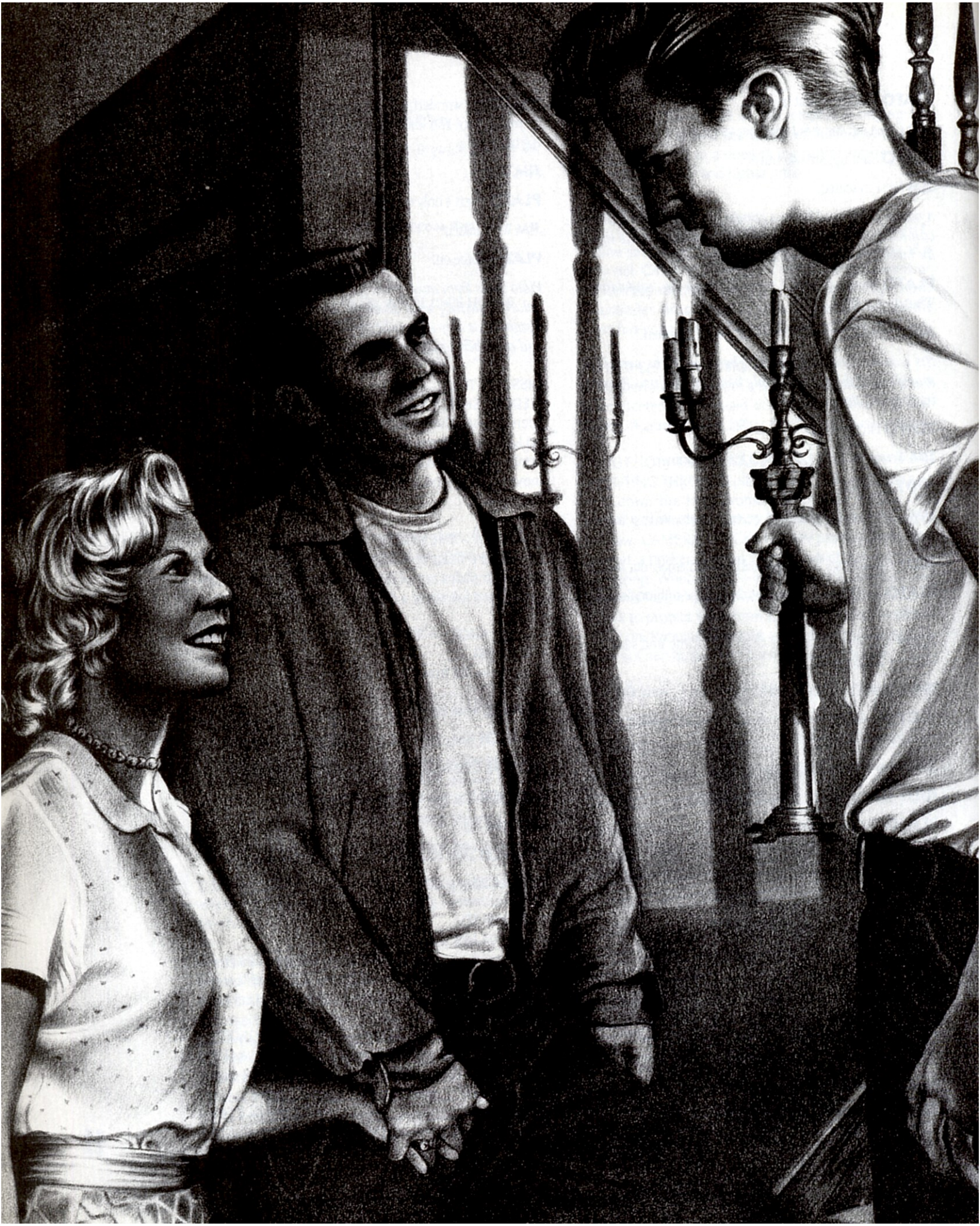

pool's bottom. All three are laughing hysterically when suddenly Jim starts to lose his balance.

JIM *(Yelling)* Quick! Fill the pool! *(He falls in. Plato rushes to him)* Let's see how long we can stay under.

PLATO Man, you're schizoid!

JIM *(In another outburst of laughing)* I'm what? What?

JUDY You can't talk underwater!

JIM *(Gargling)* I bet you hear everything I say!

PLATO *(Gargling)* Isn't he schizoid?

JIM *(Gargling)* Hey! How 'bout that!

They laugh again. Jim swings up the ladder and goes to Judy. Plato follows.

PLATO Haven't you noticed your personality splitting?

JIM Not lately.

They all sit on the blanket.

JIM How do you know so much about this junk, Plato?

PLATO I had to go to a headshrinker. I only went twice, though. My mother said it cost too much, so she went to Hawaii instead.

Jim lies back with his head in Judy's lap. She strokes his hair and smiles at him. Plato looks away.

JIM No. Seriously. What's your trouble?

Plato hesitates a moment, then leans back, cuddling between the two of them.

PLATO I don't know, but whatever it is, it's gone now. I mean I'm happy now. Here.

Jim puts his arm under Plato's chin.

PLATO I came here before.

JIM When was that?

PLATO When was I here? When I ran away. I used to run away a lot but they always took me back.

JIM Who?

PLATO Mom and Dad. I used to be in my crib and I'd listen to them fight.

JIM You remember that far back? Boy, I can't even remember yesterday.

JUDY Plato, where's your father now?

PLATO He's dead. He was a hero in the China Sea.

JIM You told me he's a big wheel in New York!

PLATO I did? Well, he might as well be dead. What's the difference?

JUDY It's all right.

JIM Sure.

Plato closes his eyes. Judy hums a lullaby as she strokes Jim's lips with a finger. He snaps at it. Then he kisses her hand, looks at her palm. They whisper.

JIM You have a long lifeline.

She takes his palm and examines it.

JUDY So have you.

She kisses it, holds her cheek against it.

JIM Ever been in a place like this before?

JUDY Not exactly. It's certainly huge.

JIM How many rooms do you think there are?

JUDY I don't know.

JIM Should we explore?

She looks at Plato. Jim shrugs—tests to see if the boy is awake, but there is no reaction. Carefully, they crawl to their feet, Jim supporting Plato's head with his hands as they do so. Jim takes the other blanket and covers Plato with it. Judy kneels on the other side and tucks it in. They look at each other across him and smile. Then suddenly Judy bends down and kisses Plato's cheek very softly. Judy and Jim rise.

Jim takes a candle from the candelabra and leads Judy along the edge of the pool to the glass doors beyond. Silence except for their footfalls on the flagstone. In the distance we see the doors open and the couple pass through. When they close again, a sob comes from Plato.

HIGH ANGLE CLOSE-UP – PLATO
lying as they left him, but his eyes are open and he is crying. CAMERA BOOMS UP as Plato throws off the blanket and looks after them. CAMERA BOOMS HIGHER until he is revealed as a small and lonely figure sitting by himself. The pool echoes his weeping.

DISSOLVE TO:
INSIDE LIBRARY – MANSION – NIGHT
The door opens slowly and Jim appears with the candle. Judy lingers at the door. The flickering light reveals a formerly lavish room, paneled in oak. There is a tapestry couch, empty bookcases, some dim portraits, a leather table and several chairs around a great stone fireplace.

JIM Hey! Will you look at *this* room! *(He looks behind him)* Judy?

She comes forward. Jim drips wax on the tabletop and sticks the candle on it. His hand shakes. Judy sits on the couch.

JIM Want to read any books? Take your pick! *(He sits beside her)* Isn't this the craziest?

JUDY Hi.

JIM Hi.

He takes her hand. She looks at him and smiles.

JIM What?

JUDY Your hand's all wet and it's shaky. *(She kisses it)* You're so funny.

JIM Why?

JUDY I don't know—you just are. Leaving a light for Plato. That was nice.

JIM Maybe he's scared of the dark.

JUDY Are you?

Jim snuffs out the candle. They are left in moonlight. A pause.

JIM *(Singing)* Here we are—out of cigarettes—Junior's in the nurs'ry—See how late it gets—

JUDY You don't need to do that.

JIM There's something I should tell you, Judy.

JUDY I know already. We don't have to pretend now.

JIM *(Laughing)* What a relief!

He leans back, relaxed at last. She snuggles close to him.

JUDY Is this what it's like to love somebody?

JIM You disappointed?

JUDY *(Mussing his hair)* Funny Jimmy. You're so clean and you—this is silly.

JIM What?

JUDY You smell like baby powder.

JIM So do you.

JUDY I never felt so clean before.

JIM It's not going to be lonely, Judy. Not for you and not for me.

JUDY *I love somebody.* All the time I've been looking for someone to love me and now—I love somebody. And it's so easy. Why is it easy now?

JIM It is for me, too.

JUDY I love you, Jim. I really mean it.

She kisses his lips gently and looks into his face. He returns the kiss. Their arms go around each other.

JIM I mean it, too.

He kisses her again—

FULL SHOT – ROAD NEAR PLANETARIUM
Moose's heap crawls up and turns left. A moment later, the police car appears and does likewise – still holding its distance.

FULL SHOT – THE MANSION
as Moose's heap moves past on the road below. Suddenly it stops.

INSIDE MOOSE'S HEAP
Crunch looks off, curious.

GOON What you stopping for?

CRUNCH You scam a car up there?

MOOSE So what?

CRUNCH Nobody's lived in that hunk of junk for five-six years.

He switches on the spotlight. It illuminates Jim's heap.

CRUNCH Well, what do you know! I feel a kick coming on!

He turns off all the lights and gets out. The others follow.

MEDIUM SHOT – POLICE CAR
It has halted. One of the OFFICERS gets out and draws his gun. The other makes radio contact in a low voice:

OFFICER This is Unit 17. Unit 17.

RADIO Come in, Unit 17.

OFFICER We just zeroed three kids in a heap. Crest Drive and Observatory. Looks like housebreaking. Send us some help. They may be armed. Over.

CLOSE SHOT – PLATO
asleep on the blanket. Only a single candle burns in the candelabra. The same low whistles heard earlier come from all around him and rise in volume. Suddenly his eyes open. He doesn't move, but he has come suddenly awake.

LOW SHOT – PLATO
lying in f.g. Next to his face are a pair of booted feet. He looks up. CAMERA PANS TO SHOW Crunch. He is smiling. He holds a tire chain in his hand which he swings.

CRUNCH Good morning.

FULL SHOT – THE SWIMMING POOL
Goon and Moose are behind Crunch. They too are armed with tire chains. They all laugh. Plato rolls away from them and runs toward the deep end of the pool.

CRUNCH Moose! Take the steps! Goon! The other side.

The boys run to their assigned places. Plato sees no exit. He

flings himself down the ladder and into the pool. He feints this way and that, the boys responding as if they were fencing. Crunch swings down the ladder and his boots make a loud report as they hit the pool. Moose advances down the steps at the shallow end. Goon climbs onto the pool bottom at the opposite side. The feinting continues, wordlessly, as the circle closes around Plato. The only sounds are the stamping of their boots as they try to distract him from side to side, and the animalistic grunts they make to scare him. Suddenly Plato sees an opening and plunges past Moose, pushing him over, and stumbles up the steps.

CRUNCH Come on! Let's make it!

They stream out of the pool after Plato. He reaches the glass doors first, streaks through, and bangs them shut behind him.

TRAVELING SHOT – ARCADE
Plato's face is visible only when the moonlight strikes him through the passing windows. The sound of running steps behind him.

FULL SHOT – MAIN ROOM
A pattern of moonlight on the bare floor as Plato dashes in and through it. He falls over a piece of furniture and comes scurrying in to CAMERA, wheels around on hands and knees to face the door. The boys plunge into the moonlit square and stop. Plato tries not to breathe. A match is struck. Crunch looks around, but can see nothing. That match goes out. The boys start up the stairs, whispering. Immediately, Plato crawls forward, under the piano. He HEARS a murmur of voices from behind the oak door of the library – next to the piano. He moves to it stealthily.

CLOSE SHOT – PLATO AT THE DOOR
listening through it, on hands and knees. His confusion mounts. He shakes his head to clear it. Then suddenly, he rises and tries the knob. The door is locked. He beats on it.

PLATO *Save* me!

The boys run across the room. As they hit the moonlit square, Plato spins and fires. Somebody drops and starts moaning. Jim opens the door.

PLATO *(Shrieks)* What you run out on me for! What you leave me alone for?

JIM Plato!

There is a rush of boys coming forward.

PLATO *(With hate)* I don't want you for my father!

JIM Your *father!*

Plato fires at Jim. Jim leaps at Plato with a cry and knocks him down.

JIM *(In rage)* You crazy nut! You crazy, crazy nut!

PLATO *(Screaming)* Get away from me!

He rolls away from Jim and runs to the main door.

JUDY Jim!

MAIN DOOR – FROM INSIDE
Plato falls upon it, fumbles with the bolt and swings the door wide. He steps out into the waning moonlight and we see him running down the lawn. Jim rushes into the doorway and stops short.

FULL SHOT – MANSION
The Officers are moving away from us toward it. Plato runs wildly toward them.

OFFICER *(Sharply)* Halt!

Plato stops, confused.

OFFICER Come here.

Jim runs out onto the promenade and starts over the balustrade.

JIM Plato!

CLOSE SHOT – PLATO
His face is working desperately in growing panic.

OFFICER'S VOICE Come here, son.

PLATO No!

JIM'S VOICE Plato!

OFFICER'S VOICE Just walk over here quietly now—and there won't be any trouble.

Plato runs out.

CLOSE SHOT – JIM
as he screams.

JIM Plato!

FULL SHOT – MAIN DOORWAY
as Judy rushes out, followed by Goon and Moose. They all stop dead at the balustrade.

JUDY Jim! Watch out! He shot Crunch!

REVERSE SHOT – LAWN
Jim seen in f.g. Plato bolting toward the woods in the direction of the Planetarium. The Officers have both hit the ground in the distance. They fire again. Jim hesitates a moment, then rushes after Plato. The Officers fire again.

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MOVING SHOT – JIM
as he runs after Plato.

MEDIUM SHOT – OFFICERS
as they rise to their feet.

FIRST OFFICER Take the house! I'll head him off.

FULL SHOT – FRONT OF MANSION
Judy flies down the stairs and rushes past CAMERA.

OFFICER'S VOICE Halt! Halt!

A shot rings out.

EDGE OF WOODS
as Jim hurtles in from the open ground beyond. He stumbles against a tree and sinks down.

JIM *(Yelling)* Plato!

TRAVELING SHOT – IN THE WOODS
as Plato rushes through the moonlit trees, sobbing.

JIM'S VOICE *(Distant)* Plato!

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM
at the base of a tree. He is whimpering, shaking his head. Judy crashes through the brush and drops beside him.

JUDY Did he hit you?

She is on the verge of hysteria.

JIM No!

JUDY We have to go back!

JIM No! I got to find him.

He starts to rise.

JUDY After he tried to shoot you?

JIM He didn't mean it—

SOUND of distant gunfire. Both freeze, listening.

JUDY Oh my God! They're killing him!

Jim runs ahead blindly and disappears into the trees. Judy rushes after him for a few steps, then stops.

THE PLANETARIUM – MOONLIGHT
SHOOTING down from the dome. Plato reels in far below and comes toward us along the parking lot. He disappears underneath the lip of the balcony. The Officer walks forward, stalking slowly from shadow to shadow. A patrol car rolls in behind and a small crowd is beginning to gather.

MEDIUM SHOT – DOOR TO PLANETARIUM
Plato clutches the handle. The door is locked. He whimpers once in frustration, then smashes the glass with his gun and dives through.

INSIDE PLANETARIUM
as Plato lands. He is cut and bleeding.

OFFICER'S VOICE Come out of there.

Plato wheels and skitters backward across the floor of the observatory on his hands and knees until he comes to the door of the Planetarium theater.

REVERSE SHOT – MAIN ENTRANCE
seen from inside. The Officer in b.g., Plato in f.g. The Officer appears in the entrance, then moves quickly to one side to be less of a target.

OFFICER You're making it tough on yourself, kid. Come out quietly now. You didn't kill anybody yet.

Plato fires at him, then opens the door of the Planetarium theater and runs inside. The door swings shut behind him.

OUTSIDE PLANETARIUM
The Officer is hugging the wall. He reaches in through the broken glass and unlatches the door from the inside. Then he kicks it open. Another SIREN wails and a spotlight catches him.

OFFICER *(Yelling past CAMERA)* Hey, a little help here! I got a cookaboo inside. He's hot!

FULL SHOT – PARKING LOT
as two patrol cars wheel in. The OFFICERS dismount and move forward. Dawn is beginning to break. Other SIRENS are heard approaching in the distance.

APPROACHING OFFICER We heard firing. He get anybody?

OFFICER *(At door)* Yeah. He wounded some kid.

PROWL CAR – ANOTHER PART OF TOWN (PROCESS)
Ray is driving. Jim's Father is beside him. The Mother is in the backseat.

RADIO Located at Summit Drive—the Planetarium.

RAY *(Snapping on mike)* The Planetarium? One kid inside—five housebreaking in area. Will proceed. *(Turning to Jim's parents)* There are some kids in trouble—you'll have to go with me.

FATHER Perfectly all right.

PARKING LOT – DOME IN DISTANCE
framed by the gathering dawn. A crowd is starting to

assemble, climbing up the walks toward the Planetarium – men and women in their nightclothes, even some small children. One of them is crying. It is the only sound. Several patrol cars now line the parking lot and an OFFICER is trying to keep the crowd back. The Negro Woman, in her nightgown and overcoat, pushes forward from a cab and accosts the Officer on guard.

NEGRO WOMAN What's going on?

OFFICER I don't know, lady. Some kid's in trouble. Stand back, please.

NEGRO WOMAN I got to know. My boy run off tonight. He had a gun with him, too.

MEDIUM SHOT – BUSHES BORDERING PLANETARIUM
as Jim climbs through them and stops short, staring in amazement.

FULL SHOT – PARKING LOT
Jim seen in f.g. hiding in the screen of leaves. Beyond we see the full activity – the crowd, the cars, searchlights playing on the Planetarium entrance, police moving in under direction of a CHIEF who rides in a speaker car.

CHIEF *(Loud on speaker)* Silence. Please maintain silence. The crowd will keep back and stay off the pavements. Keep back and stay off the pavements. There will be emergency vehicles coming through. This is a warning for your own protection.

Ray's prowl car comes in. Jim's parents climb out, curious. Ray hurries to consult with an officer, who briefs him, then hurries to the Chief's car.

MEDIUM SHOT – CHIEF'S CAR
as Ray hurries in.

CHIEF Hello, Ray—Know anything about this?

RAY As much as you do—Loan me your mike, will you?

CHIEF *(Handing it to him)* Help yourself.

RAY *(Into mike)* I am addressing the boy in the Planetarium. I am speaking to the boy inside. This is Ray Framek from the Juvenile Division—

CLOSE-UP – JIM
as he reacts to Ray's name. He rises and looks off.

RAY'S VOICE *(Over speaker)* You are now surrounded. You are surrounded by many armed police. Whoever you are, drop your weapon and come outside . . .

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM'S FATHER
standing by Ray's car, gazing off with interest. His wife comes out and stands beside him, looks at him questioningly.

RAY'S VOICE *(Over speaker)* Come outside. Clasp your hands over your head and come outside quietly—

The Father's gaze has traveled over the scene. Suddenly he sees his son and goes rigid.

MOTHER What is it, Frank?

FATHER Nothing. Stay here.

The Father moves behind the crowd, CAMERA TRUCKING with him, until he reaches the bushes at the edge of the parking lot and stops, gathering himself. Meanwhile, Ray's voice continues over:

RAY'S VOICE *(Over speaker)* Nobody will harm you if you follow these instructions. We are here to protect you. Drop your gun and come outside. Nobody will hurt you if you do as I say—

The Father starts forward along the bushes as if stalking game. Each step is carefully placed and quiet, but his heart tugs him along like a kite dragging an anchor.

REVERSE SHOT – JIM AND FATHER
Jim in f.g. alone, looking about for an opening (a bull charging out of its dark pit into the sun and finding many enemies). Beyond him the Father is advancing slowly. There is neither light nor attention focused on their particular arena. Suddenly, as the Father is nearly upon him, Jim sees him and makes a break. Triggered, the Father lunges after him. Jim trips on a branch and goes down, the Father on top of him.

JIM Let me go!

FATHER No! I've got you—I'm keeping you!

JIM You don't want me!

Choking a cry, the Father seizes the boy's collar and hits him hard, several times as he says:

FATHER You think that's the truth? You think that's the truth? I've been nothing for you, have I?

JIM Take your hands off me!

FATHER Have I? Nothing for you. As far as you're concerned, I'm dead—

JIM I have to get in there—

FATHER *Listen to me!*

JIM I have to get in there *before somebody dies!*

FATHER Who means this much to you? Who could you care enough about to—

JIM A kid. My friend. A little kid.

FATHER Where's his father? Let his father take care of him.

JIM He hasn't got one—

FATHER You're not his father!

JIM —anymore than I have. He needs me. I can't run out on him.

FATHER What do you want me to do? Tell you sure—go out and get killed? You want my blessing, too?

JIM It's my life.

A floodlight hits them, blinds them. They freeze. Judy appears in the shadow of the bushes, out of breath from running. Father and son speak very softly now.

FATHER You could get shot.

JIM I know—I know. But even if it's just for a minute—

FATHER Aren't you afraid?

JIM —just for one minute—let me live.

FATHER I love you.

RAY'S VOICE *(Shouting—no longer on speaker)* Jim!

JIM Let me live. Here! Now! Now!

RAY'S VOICE *(Nearer)* Hold it there!

FATHER I love you. You hear what I say? Just tell me that.

JIM I hear.

TRAVELING SHOT – RAY
rushing down the beam of light.

RAY Hold it right where you are!

Ray and CAMERA stop as he reaches Jim and the Father.

JIM I tried to get to you.

RAY I know. That's fine. That's good—but let's move back out of range before you both get hurt.

FATHER He says his friend's in there. We want to go after him.

RAY The police will take care of that, Jim. He's our responsibility.

JIM He's *mine*. He's alone and he's scared and he's liable to do anything if some cop goes in and scares him worse!

RAY I'm sorry, Jim. I'd like to let you, but I can't.

FATHER *(To Jim)* All right—go. Go ahead.

Jim dashes away. Ray starts after him, but the Father grabs his arm and swings him around.

RAY *You know what you're doing?*

FATHER Yes! Obstructing the law! You're clear, Mr. Framek. You tried and I interfered.

RAY *(Yelling) Hold your fire! Hold all fire!*

His command is echoed by the Chief over the speaker.

RAY You're out of your mind!

FATHER Not anymore.

The men look off to the Planetarium where Jim is completing his dash up the steps. Ray puts his hand on the Father's shoulder. Then he notices Judy.

RAY Judy—what are you—

JUDY No wonder Jimmy's different.

RAY You know him, too?

JUDY *(Smiling, crying)* "I love you!" What a wonderful thing to say!

Jim's Father glances at her, then looks back.

INSIDE PLANETARIUM
as Jim comes dashing in, spins around, staring. A siren is HEARD outside growing shrill.

CHIEF'S VOICE *(Over speaker)* Ambulance. Ambulance is coming through. Clear a passage. Will you people make way there?

Floodlights strike the door and illuminate the lobby dimly.

JIM *(Softly)* Plato?

Silence. Jim moves cautiously to the door of the Planetarium theater. Another siren is HEARD approaching. More floodlights strike the door.

JIM *(Calling softly)* Plato? Plato, you in there? *(Silence)* Hey, I'm going to open the door now. You'll be able to see me and you can shoot me if you want, but just remember one thing, Plato—You're my friend. That means a lot to me. *(He opens the door slowly)*

INSIDE DOME
Darkness except for the slash of light from the door where Jim stands in silhouette. He lets the door close. Blackness.

JIM Plato?

PLATO I'm here.

JIM Boy, I'm blind as a bat! You got a match? I'm going to break my neck in here. Where are you?

PLATO I've got a gun.

JIM I know. Light a match, will you, Plato?

Plato obeys.

JIM That's swell. How are you?

PLATO I'm fine.

Another siren is HEARD outside. Then another. Jim has reached the lecturer's desk, and, just as the match goes out, he throws a switch. The stars appear on the dome and the projector starts its slow revolution.

PLATO You think the end of the world will come at nighttime, Jim?

JIM No. At dawn.

PLATO Why?

JIM I just have a feeling. Where are you?

PLATO Here.

JIM Well, stop hiding and stand up. I can't talk to you if I don't see you. *(Jim waits. Nothing happens)* Hey, look at the stars, Plato. Stand up and look at the stars.

Plato rises from behind a row, then Jim continues:

JIM That's fine. *(Jim approaches slowly)* I'm not going to hurt you, Plato.

PLATO Why did you run out on me?

JIM I didn't run out. We were coming right back.

PLATO You sure?

JIM Sure I'm sure. You ready to come out now?

A siren is HEARD.

PLATO No.

JIM I promise nothing'll happen if you do. *(Silence)* You want my jacket? It's warm.

Jim takes off his jacket and holds it out to Plato.

PLATO Can I keep it?

JIM What do *you* think?

Jim gives him the jacket—Plato puts it on.

JIM You want to give me your gun now, Plato?

PLATO My gun?

JIM In your pocket. Give it to me.

A siren is HEARD.

PLATO Why?

JIM I gave you my jacket. It's a fair exchange.

PLATO I need it.

JIM Just give it to me for a second.

PLATO *(Handing it to Jim)* It's my new gun that my daddy gave me. It's a Fourth of July gun. It shoots caps. *(He snickers)*

JIM I know.

Jim removes the cartridges and puts them in his pocket.

PLATO You promised to give it back.

A siren is HEARD.

JIM Okay. Here. Friends never break promises, do they?

Plato shakes his head.

JIM Now listen. There are a lot of people outside and they all want you to be safe. You understand that? They said I could come in and bring you out.

PLATO Why?

JIM They like you. Okay?

PLATO You're Jim.

JIM I'm Jim. Let's go.

Jim opens the door for Plato, then follows him out.

OBSERVATORY
as Jim and Plato come to the entrance. Plato sees an officer.

PLATO Who's that?

JIM Just a guard.

PLATO I shot at one of them.

JIM You were dreaming. It was a dream.

OUTSIDE OBSERVATORY
as Plato and Jim come forward into the early dawn. Floodlights now cover the entire Planetarium. It is as bright as magnesium burning. Plato stops and looks off, scared. Even Jim is startled.

SLOW PAN SHOT – THE CROWD
It has grown enormously. Silence. There are armed officers everywhere – all waiting, alert.

MEDIUM SHOT – NEGRO WOMAN
Her eyes are moist. Her lips move in silent prayer.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM'S PARENTS
The Father looks on anxiously. The Mother is crying against the car.

MEDIUM SHOT – JUDY
watching.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM AND PLATO

This spread pages **110-117** of original script

PLATO Those aren't my friends. Make them go away.

JIM *(Tense; calling past CAMERA)* Ray! Will you tell these guys to move back?

Suddenly Plato bolts. Jim wheels after him.

JIM Plato! Don't be a fool!

FULL SHOT – PLANETARIUM
as Plato dashes to the stairway leading to the balcony and dome. In f.g., an officer drops to his knees and fires.

JIM What are you doing? He's unarmed!

But they see the gun in Plato's hand.

FULL SHOT – BALCONY AND DOME
SHOOTING DOWN the stairs as Plato rushes up. Jim closes behind him, makes a grab and misses.

JIM Plato!

PLATO Keep away from me! I don't believe you anymore!

JIM You have to believe me! They won't shoot! They saw your gun and they thought you still had bullets! Give it here!

PLATO No!

CAMERA PANS with Plato as he struggles up the dome. Jim stays below on the balcony, watching helplessly.

JIM Give me the gun, Plato. Toss it. We can have breakfast later and we can talk all you want to! Just toss your gun.

Plato has arrived at the pinnacle.

JIM Come on. Reach out and toss it, Plato.

PLATO Can we have breakfast at my house?

JIM Sure we can. Anything.

CLOSE SHOT – PLATO ON DOME
as he looks around at the scene below.

QUICK CUTS – OFFICERS
staked out at various levels, revolvers at the ready.

AMBULANCE
the crew alert.

CLOSE-UP – CHIEF
watching nervously.

CHIEF He'll kill that boy!

MEDIUM SHOT – PLATO
He raises the gun toward Jim.

PLATO Catch!

As he is about to throw it—

TWO SHOT – CHIEF AND RAY
staring, tense.

CHIEF Fire!

A shot rings out.

RAY *(Savagely)* No!

FULL SHOT – DOME
as several shots ring out. Plato drops like a stone and plummets down the dome to Jim's feet.

CLOSE SHOT – JIM

JIM *(Wild) But I've got the bullets!*

CLOSE SHOT – NEGRO WOMAN
as she screams, a handkerchief in her mouth.

CLOSE SHOT – JUDY
She sobs once, and bites her lip.

MEDIUM SHOT – JIM
staring down at Plato.

JIM Plato? *(He crouches over Plato)* Plato. Hey, Jerkpot!

There is nothing. Jim begins to cry. He rises and faces the crowd, shaking his head in wonder and reproach.

JIM *(Quiet)* What did you have to do that for?

FULL SHOT – THE CROWD
The Negro Woman is hysterical. Jim's Father shoves past her, followed by the Mother. They rush toward CAMERA.

AMBULANCE
as crew springs into action, unloads stretcher.

THE BALCONY
Jim holds Plato's body. His face is buried in the neck. He rocks back and forth, weeping. The Father comes in and stands above him. The Mother and Ray follow.

FATHER Come on, son. Let him go. *(He touches Jim's shoulder lightly)* Let him go, son.

The Father bends to Jim's level.

FATHER Son . . .

Suddenly Jim collapses into his Father's arms, sobbing uncontrollably.

FATHER You did everything a man should do.

JIM You got to help me.

FATHER We've got to help each other.

JIM I mean it.

FATHER I swear to you. I swear.

The Father embraces him.

MEDIUM SHOT – JUDY
crying silently in the crowd. Her Father pushes through to her. He puts his arm around her, from behind.

JUDY'S FATHER *(Murmuring as he kisses her)* Judy. Judy, honey.

JUDY *(Reappraising her own father)* I want to go to him, Dad.

FATHER We'll both go to him.

They come forward, PAST CAMERA, the Father with his arms around her.

LOW ANGLE - NEGRO WOMAN
seen against the dome as she bends over Plato's body.

AMBULANCE ATTENDANT *(Appearing over her with litter)* Excuse us. We have to take him now. Will you excuse us?

NEGRO WOMAN *(As they lift Plato onto litter)* This poor baby got nobody. Just nobody.

As he is carried past her, she takes something from around her neck and puts it in his hand.

BALCONY STAIRS – FROM BELOW
as Jim, supported by his Father, comes down. Ray is behind him. They pause for a silent meeting with the Mother at the foot of the stairs. She kisses Jim and starts wiping his tears away, but he is weeping soundlessly and it does no good.

Ray touches Jim's arm to start him moving, but Jim looks back up at the dome. The ambulance attendants are bearing Plato's litter down the last few stairs, followed by the Negro Woman. Judy and her Father come to watch the litter pass. Jim steps forward suddenly and zips up the jacket Plato is wearing. The litter passes CAMERA and we HOLD ON TWO SHOT of Jim and Judy, seen against the dome and lightening sky.

JIM *(To Judy, half to himself)* He was always cold.

Judy moves to Jim and touches his arm lightly. He looks down at her. Changes have happened to them both. Things have been shed and others come upon. He supports her as they move after the litter of Plato where the Negro Woman mourns. His arm is around her and his step is sure.

It is not a dirge as they walk behind the silent member, nor the wedding march of children. It is that great first promenade from the locked room of fears-overcoming to the open door of fears-overcome, where a father may be met and pitied and released.

CAMERA BOOMS HIGH TO:
HIGH GENERAL SHOT – PLANETARIUM AREA
As Jim and Judy, followed at a distance by their families, thread their way through the crowd.

FADE OUT

THE END

The version of *Rebel Without a Cause* published here is Stern's revised final draft, completed in March 1955. The original script was 122 pages.

Rebel Without a Cause

Release date: October 1955

Directed by Nicholas Ray

Produced by David Weisbart

A Warner Brothers Release

PRINCIPAL CAST
Jim Stark: *James Dean*
Judy: *Natalie Wood*
Plato: *Sal Mineo*
Jim's Father: *Jim Backus*
Jim's Mother: *Ann Doran*
Buzz Gunderson: *Corey Allen*
Judy's Father: *William Hopper*
Judy's Mother: *Rochelle Hudson*
Ray Framek: *Edward Platt*
Goon: *Dennis Hopper*

From a story by Nicholas Ray, and an adaptation by Irving Shulman.

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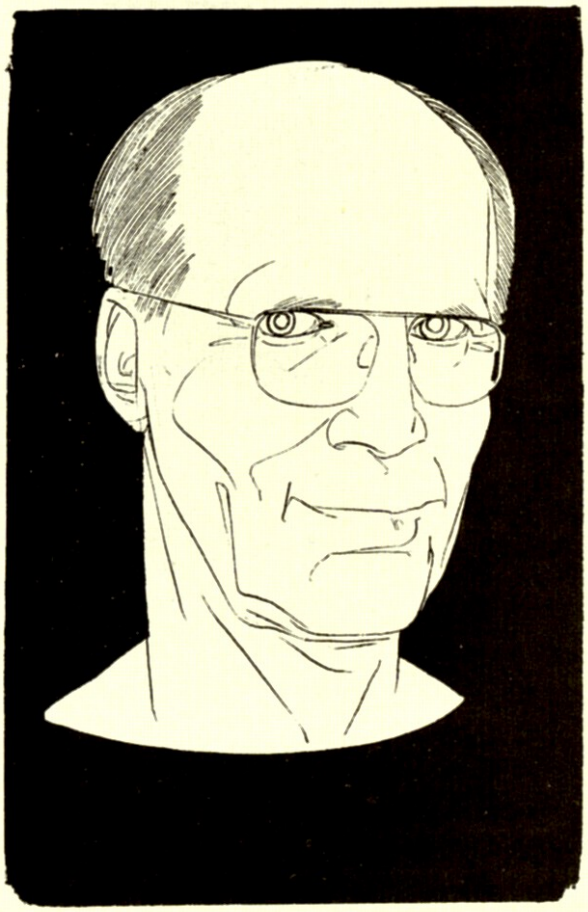
Writing *Rebel Without a Cause*

A Talk with Stewart Stern



David Johnson

Stewart Stern was raised at the perimeter of two grand Hollywood families—he was the nephew of Paramount co-founder Adolph Zukor, and a cousin of Arthur Loew, Jr., whose grandfather, Marcus Loew, founded Loews Theaters, parent company of MGM. Born in New York, Stern attended the University of Iowa before serving in the army in WWII. He fought as an infantryman in the Battle of the Bulge and was, for a time, listed as MIA. Returning from the war, he moved to Hollywood with his cousin Arthur. His first film job came, not from his powerful relatives, who wished to avoid accusations of nepotism, but from playwright Joe Fields, who helped get him a job as a dialogue director.

His break came when Arthur Loew, Sr. asked him for written comments on the script for *Teresa*, to be directed by Fred Zinnemann, about a serviceman and the Italian war bride he brings home to New York. Stern's notes brought such depth of understanding to the characters that Loew and co-producer Lazar Wechsler hired him to rewrite the script. Stern drew upon his own battlefield experiences, and visited veteran's hospitals to study the psychiatric records of patients suffering from combat fatigue. This painstaking attention to psychological detail would mark all of his subsequent work. Released in 1951, *Teresa* earned Stern an Oscar nomination. His focus on psychological motivation was in step with the generation of young actors coming of age in Hollywood at that time.

After meeting Nicholas Ray and James Dean, he was hired to write *Rebel Without a Cause*. Stern was shown a previous draft, written by Irving Shulman, but never saw Nicholas Ray's original outline for the story. Despite Shulman and Stern's extensive contributions to the plot, Nick Ray alone was nominated for Best Original Story.

Rebel Without a Cause and the character of Jim Stark as depicted by James Dean seemed to define the restless, rebellious, misunderstood American teenager of the '50s, and following Dean's death in an auto accident just prior to *Rebel* 's release in 1955, he and the film became touchstones of adolescent angst for generations to come. In tribute to his fallen friend, Stern wrote the narration for the documentary *The James Dean Story* (1957) for then-unknown director Robert Altman.

Stern would go on to write *The Ugly American* for Marlon Brando in 1963, as well as *Rachel, Rachel*, which marked the 1968 directing debut of Paul Newman, for which Stern earned another Oscar nomination. His screenplay for *The Last Movie* (1971) has become a script of legend, in part because the finished film, directed by Dennis Hopper, contains so little of it. Stern also wrote the script for the television movie *Sybil* (1976), which earned him an Emmy award.

Stern now lives in Seattle with his wife, artist Marilee Stern. He teaches at the University of Washington and at the Sundance Institute Screenwriters Lab.

You wrote Rebel *in the early '50s. Could you talk about the times and set the scene for us?*

It's hard for me to talk about that period without talking about the thing that had enfolded us in it and continued to haunt everything we did, which was World War II. A lot of us came out of that more aware of who we were than when we went in. One of the reasons I love [Terence Malick's] *The Thin Red Line* so much is because it shows how people who considered themselves outsiders were able to find incredible connection in the Army. *The Thin Red Line* spoke to that connection, but by giving everyone inner monologues, it spoke, also, of our unbridgeable separation. Aside from the circumstance of being in the same squad, we soldiers had nothing in common. And we made commonality by creating lies about our lives—our women, our dating history, our marriages—and some truths.

You once said that war taught you about the audience you were writing for, and that you saw Buzz, Crunch and the others in the gang in Rebel *as soldiers in search of an enemy.*

They were in search of some kind of justification for the unrest that they felt, and for somebody to blame. And I was in the mode then to blame my parents for what I discovered about myself during the war, i.e., a childhood that was missing a lot that I needed, including a father who could show me how to be first a boy and then a man. I thought I had to masquerade so much, and feared war was like an echo of all those baseball games I fled from at summer camp because I was so embarrassed that I didn't know how to throw a ball. A lot of that began, really, as a child, because while my uncle, Adolph Zukor, had this great estate, had everything that I, as the nephew, could have prayed for—from 18-hole golf course to tennis courts—and while they gave us little miniature golf clubs and hired a counselor, it was all to substitute for our absent fathers.

So you would relate most in the film to Plato.

There was a clean division. I was Plato in many ways, and my wish was to find a Jim Stark who would protect me and teach me—just as I was Jim Stark, who prayed that his father would stand up and protect him and teach him.

Did you see the restlessness of Jim and Plato and Buzz as relating to their being a postwar generation?

I saw them as kids who were trying to find, in their own lives, what some of us had found in the service: an alternative family. Kids who had to create their own society because of the failure of the families they'd been born into to hear them or address them at a deep level. The *Rebel* generation responded to the notion of the lateral family and reached for each other. They rejected the hypocrisy in all institutions. They created this lateral family which ultimately became Woodstock, became the '60s.

So out of this thinking, you wrote Jim Stark's lines, those anguished "Give me an answer" lines.

And the father's answer is: in ten years you won't even think about this. Well, that's the father's solution to his pain with *his* own mother, that critical woman who never gave him a chance. That father was a castrated man, he was an incomplete man.

Hence, you portrayed this by putting him in an apron, on his knees. Jim sees his father on the floor and thinks it's his mother.

And the father laughs about that, laughs at himself. He knows. And he's glad, in a way, to be recognized by his son. At least they have something to laugh about together. That came from my life, by the way. I once caught my dad in my mom's apron.

Because of '50s shows like Father Knows Best, *where the family seemed idyllic, was the nuclear family something that hadn't really been questioned yet, in popular culture or movies?*

In the theater it was certainly questioned. O'Neill was questioning it all the time. Thornton Wilder, in a way, had built the idealized family in *Our Town* [1938], and it is still one of the most moving stories. But in the play, no one ever really appreciates or hears or sees each other, and that's what the kids in *Rebel* were starved for.

In terms of having agendas that dovetailed, Nicholas Ray, James Dean and yourself, you all felt something for this character Jim Stark and his relationship with his father?

Yes. See, Nick saw *Teresa*, which was the first film I wrote, and it was about a kid who had, as I had, gone through that war. In *Teresa*, I let the kid do what I felt like doing, which was to run away. I stayed, I was decorated, but inside it was: I don't have it! My arms are numb! I can never stick a bayonet through a German overcoat! That's what an army is, it's people trying to hide their frailties in front of each other because they need to be strong in each other's eyes, to be loyal, to watch out for each other.

Which influenced your take on Buzz's gang, which is "without a cause," without a war?

Without a family. It's the way the gangs are now, too. They *are* their families, with family rituals, and home turf that won't be invaded. And even altruistic, sometimes. Along with all the conflict and machismo, there is that sense of a broader society. *Teresa* was full of this army connection, and the disturbed family. Nick Ray was very taken with it. It had almost the same set of parents that were in *Rebel*. There was the same search for identity, for fatherhood, so Nick thought that there was commonality between me, the writer who had done what I did, and the experience he was having as a father. He didn't know how to reach his own son, and he thought that that problem was widespread. I talked to him about the research I had done for *Teresa* at the V.A. *[Veterans Administration]*, opening up files on why people collapsed in the war situation, why were they getting post-traumatic syndrome. That's when a lot of psychiatry in America began, as a result of people falling apart in the war. Sodium pentothal came out of the medical personnel in the army desperately searching for a way to get to the bottom of trauma so the guys could be sent back to the line. John Huston did an incredible documentary called *Let There Be Light* [1945], which was restricted. I saw it through special arrangement when I was researching *Teresa*. Meanwhile, Nick realized that teenage trouble was not a ghetto problem, not inner-

city or economic, but an emotional phenomenon about alienated parents and children having a terrible breakdown.

Hence the idea that these could be middle-class, affluent kids?

That is what Nick Ray was passionate to show. And Jimmy Dean was certainly one of those kids, even though his background had been a rural one. He had had a calamitous first nine years, he had a very removed father who was a sweet man. As Jimmy said, "One of the goodest men I ever met." But he was totally without any concept of who he had in his son. The mother, who was very artistic, died when Jimmy was nine and he went back on the train with her body to Indiana and was raised by his uncle and aunt on their farm. So our association on *Rebel* was this meeting of people who had been able to put words around their feelings of pain, alienation, isolation, how do you become a man, when do you stop telling yourself lies, when do you hold your parents accountable.

Jim Stark is a rebel, but a very polite one. He's respectful of his parents at the same time as he's pushing them.

Well, your mother and your father are the only mother and father you have, as any abused child is liable at some point in their lives to point out. And the child takes on the guilt for things not working. In Jim Stark's case, he had this anger, too, which he finally expressed directly—sometimes it's when you get really angry that you feel the most intact, the most powerful, the clearest about yourself. But Jim Stark could masquerade his rage with humor. As long as he looked the way he was supposed to and said the words, he could secretly be satirizing and mocking and giving vent to anger in a very roundabout way.

There is a chilling mugging scene that opens your script, that got cut, so that now the film opens with Jim Stark playing with something the mugged man dropped—a toy monkey. But that image works because it becomes symbolic.

It works because Jimmy decided to do a preview of the whole story in the single gesture of covering the monkey, the way he later covers Plato, becoming not only the protector but also the child in the fetal position. So it was an act of incredible longing and tenderness. It was both sides of him, the one seeking protection and the one giving it.

Nick Ray wanted James Dean to improvise a little? Dean would take a sentence and turn it, say, into a chunk of five words instead of seven. As if he was processing the scripted words into mouthfuls that were comfortable for him to speak.

But it's amazing how very literally he did stay with that script. He was a real problem for most directors and Hollywood. He was independent from the day he was born, and he thought that everything was just shit until it was proven otherwise, and everyone was a fake and a fool and out to get things for themselves and never told the truth until proven otherwise. So to come into trust with Jimmy was a task. He was almost as clever as Brando in keeping people away, as hard as he was reaching out to them. The tragedy of his death lets us forget that he ended up alienating more people than he attracted.

They were both using method acting?

Jimmy kind of was, but I suspect he only went to the Actors Studio because he thought it was the right thing to do. He was not there long. He didn't have the training Brando had. He came out of the head of Zeus, like Athena. He was his own creation, he had the gift.

Was there any sense at the time that this was an important film, in a mythic kind of way?

There was a sense that we had a staggering actor who had proven himself in *East of Eden*, which was in previews prior to my beginning to write the script. So Jimmy became the be-all and end-all, and Elia Kazan had given him his imprimatur. Nick absolutely idolized Kazan. He wanted two people to read my script—one was Kazan, the other was Clifford Odets. When Odets read it, he came up with that one line, "I got the bullets." But I caught him because nobody looked in the chamber of that gun, so Jimmy is saying "I got the bullets" but all he did was examine the clip, not see if there was one in the chamber. Still, it was my only collaboration with the greatest playwright of the first part of this century. *[laughs]*

Nick Ray had written a treatment for Rebel *called "The Blind Run," which you never read, but Irving Shulman wrote a script which you just used bits of?*

Well, my memory has made me take credit for a lot that Irving Shulman came up with. It's also complicated by the fact that Nick was what we used to call a "credit glutton," and I was warned by John Houseman when he heard that I was signed to do the script that I should be careful, that Nick had a "love-hate" relationship with writers. And that, in fact, was borne out. I found out after the fact that Shulman—who replaced Leon Uris, who had written something that didn't work—never saw "The Blind Run," the 17-page treatment that Nick sold to Warner's.

The history that I dug up was that Nick Ray had the idea to do a juvenile delinquency film, and he knew about this book by Robert Lindner, called Rebel Without a Cause, *a case study. He had some discussions with Lindner, with Lindner saying that the point of the book is that it's an indictment of conformity. Lindner said youth should not conform, they should not rebel, but just speak their mind. Ray decided this was too academic an approach, to have a "theory" for a film, but he pitched the idea to Warner's and they told him he had to hack out a treatment first. He supposedly did that, in one afternoon. Ray was paid $5,000 for a treatment that he dictated and a stenographer typed up. The treatment has been described as having a point of view, but no dramatic structure. An idea to do a film about juvenile delinquency, with the middle class rather than the ghetto as the turf, and about conformity versus rebellion.*

I didn't know that. I didn't see it. Irving didn't see it. But apparently there was an agreement that Warner's had guaranteed Nick sole original story credit. I was shocked. Irving worked for a month

beyond my being hired, which I never knew. They had given me articles to read about things that had happened in L.A., like a knife fight, and Nick described a chicken run in a tunnel. I read Irving's script up until the point I thought he had been fired, or quit, not knowing that he was continuing to write. To this day, I don't know what he wrote after the part of the script I read, or what was feeding the conferences I had with Nick Ray.

And what was the feeling of the Shulman script?

It had three kids whose names I used, but my recollection of it is that they were in someone's house for an awful lot of it. Irving introduced the planetarium, to my recollection, but it did not figure the way it did in my draft. And Irving's story never ended there. It ended at the house of one of those kids. And it didn't happen in a 24-hour period. I thought that I had changed the tunnel thing to the cliff because I'm afraid of heights, and I was trying to figure out what would be most terrifying to me. Apparently, from the research one guy did, that was something that Irving had in his outline. But if he was working while I was working, and if I had told it to Nick, Nick might have told it to Irving. Who knows?

So the situation that arose out of it is that Ray was nominated for an Oscar for a great story that he may have had an idea for, but not the dramatic structure.

Also, with either his active or silent cooperation, my whole screenplay was novelized in France under the title *La Fureur de Vivre*, by Nicholas Ray. There was no mention that anyone else had anything to do with it. So he took full credit for every word I wrote. And when I saw what the credits were intended to be in the film, I said, this is not accurate, because there was no story until I wrote the script. There was no 24 hours, no planetarium used that way. I was close enough to school age to remember the three unities of Aristotle—unity of place, of time, and of action. With the turbulence of teenage life, its operatic quality—I mean this movie was a series of operatic arias, never intended to be "realistic"—I knew that I should make it happen in a day. A day is a lifetime to a kid. The other thing was that in the Greek theater there was a stage house, with the altar in front of it where sacrifices were made, and steps that usually led to a palace, which is what the stage house was supposed to represent. And then God, at the end, came down in a machine: the *deus ex machina*, and cured everything. So when I saw the planetarium, to me it *was* the stage house of the Greek theater. It lacked only an altar. I thought, that is where the body of Plato had to be at the end. A sacrifice.

The planetarium frames the film so beautifully, because of the cosmic questions that adolescents do ask themselves. The teacher speaks of the death of a star, and man becoming nothing.

"Man existing alone will be an incident of little consequence." And Plato says, "What does he know about man alone?" And that, really, is what it was about. But when I told Nick Ray things like that, when I was asking him to give me credit on the story, he refused. He said, I'll give you co-story credit, if you give me co-screenplay credit. I said, but you didn't write a line. He said, but I thought it all up. I said, what did you think up? He said, you tell me what you think you thought up. And I talked about the sacrificial place, the 24 hours, many inventions of mine. And he said, I can show you notes of mine where I wrote that.

His contribution is undeniable, but it's cinematic. If you look at your script and you look at, for instance, the scene where mother, son and father are having the argument, Ray's basically taking what you've set up, which is a weak father, a domineering mother and an anguished, questioning son, and he's painting that dynamic on a cinematic canvas—the mother comes between the father and the son and they have a choreographed, psychological dance.

And I've never seen anything more beautifully choreographed than the knife fight, and the whole sense of mystery in the mansion. That was his discovery. He said, they're going to tear down

> *"Jimmy Dean came out of the head of Zeus, like Athena. He was his own creation."*

the *Sunset Boulevard* set, which was a real house. He said, we have to use that somehow. Couldn't they go there after the knife fight? He said, write me a scene. And I said, how do you see it? He said, well, Plato, he might be playing a real estate person trying to get in good with Judy and Jim. I went up to the office and wrote that scene, the quickest I've ever written anything. Also, Jimmy did a couple of things: in the staging of the family argument scene that you were talking about, Jimmy created the upside-down entrance. I wrote that he got a bottle of milk, because he was a child. Then he lay down on the couch. But Jimmy couldn't just sit on anything, he had to fall off it, tumble off. And so he dropped his head over the edge of it, and looked up at the stairway, and imagined the mother coming down. He revolved his head so she went from upside down to right side up. He said, that's the shot! Nick was so excited the next day when I came in. He said, Jesus, Jimmy came up with something last night, and Nick told me about the shot. And once we went to the movies together, Jimmy Dean and I—I think it was before Jimmy Backus, who did Mr. Magoo's voice, was cast as the father—but we were sitting there, and it was really jammed. The movie had begun, and we saw Jimmy Backus and his wife come in late. We could see their silhouettes, and Jimmy poked me and said, that's Backus. And Jimmy went *[in Mr. Magoo's voice]*, "Heh, heh, it's crowded in here." *[laughs]* We could see Backus turn around wondering where the hell that had come from. So that's why Jimmy Dean used Magoo's voice for "Drown 'em like puppies" in the mansion scene.

I had also heard that the mooing was a reference to you.

Well, I wrote it, but it was a memory of a thing that happened when Jimmy Dean and I first met. Jimmy loved my cousin Arthur

Loew, and I would stay with Arthur when I went to California. I had just arrived with my suitcase, and Arthur said, oh, I've got a friend in there. Jimmy, this is Stewart, Stewart, this is Jimmy. I'll be back. And he left. All I could remember was what I had heard about Jimmy in New York, what a maniac this guy was. And I said, well, it's very nice to meet you. And he said, nice to meet you, too. And we sat in the living room. Arthur had these two armchairs that spun around, so we were sitting, and not saying anything because neither of us could think of a word to say. And then Jimmy mooed. I love cows, so I mooed. We weren't looking at each other. And he mooed again. Then I mooed. I can do a calf that has been roped, where it's half-throttled, and bouncing around and the cowboy is trying to get down to throw it. I did that, and he started to laugh. Then he did a bull, I did a bull. Then we did sheep, pigs, chickens, just on and on. In fact, when Jimmy ran away once, when he didn't want to do the movie at one point—he got scared—he called me one night from New York and mooed, and that's how I knew it was him.

It's a funny thing, when people look back on movies and analyze them. I was reading one article which wondered, why is there a monkey and mooing and chickens, why are there all these animal references, and what does it all mean?

Really? *[laughs]* That's so funny.

The knife fight is so balletic and musical in the choreography, I wondered if it influenced West Side Story, *which came out six years later [1961]. Also, Nick Ray cites* Romeo and Juliet *as a big influence.*

He never told me that. Interesting. And that Natalie Wood should play Maria in *West Side Story*! Well, then you can say that *Rebel* was first influenced by *Romeo and Juliet*. I just saw it the other night, at the ballet. The knife fight is wonderful.

The cliff scene, with the chickie run, which is a complicated, mysterious series of dislocated shots, has Buzz, Plato and Judy all vying for Jim Stark, in a way.

All three people try to set their claim on a relationship that had just burst in on their lives. There's the incipient friendship between Buzz and Jim—Buzz was a leader, and he recognized that Jim, whose presence had come into his territory, was a silverback from a different part of the rain forest. There's respect between equals. They can remove themselves from the common herd, which is what they did when the two enemies walk to the edge of the cliff and say, "I like you." "Then what are we doing this for?" "Gotta do something." They had an audience, they *had* to do the chickie run. Buzz would not have done it if he didn't have to hold on so tightly to his leadership of that group. He would have said, hey, let's get a beer and get away from these creeps.

It gets back to that choice between rebellion and conformity. It's not just toward your parents and society, but it's about standing alone or joining a gang.

Or going to the police or not.

Film critic Peter Biskind wrote about that. He looked at the ending of Rebel *and said, why would Jim Stark rat? Why would he buy into the police's take on things? And when he's in the planetarium with Plato, he says, trust me, but he surreptitiously takes the bullets. Biskind was basically saying that* Rebel Without a Cause *is really about Jim Stark conforming, and that once Judy and Jim find each other, they've become a "family unit," they've conformed, they are no longer rebels.*

That's interesting. I don't think it's that simple, or at least the intention wasn't that simple. First of all, I think that the ending as written is different from the ending as filmed, which I hated. Our last big conversation, Nick Ray and I, was about the planetarium. He was dissatisfied with the father having so much to do in the ending. Originally, I wanted both of them, Plato and Jim, to die. And that the father wants to make amends, but he's so full of his own needs that he doesn't realize what's happening to his son. Jimmy says to the father, I don't have time to talk to you. And the father says, what do you mean? And Jim says, I'm very busy. And the father says, what, what are you busy with? And he says, I'm busy dying. Then he crawls over, takes off his jacket for Plato, zips it up, says "He was always cold," and dies. And so it's really Romeo and Juliet. But Nick didn't want that. He said the studio might find it a little downbeat.

In the screenplay, you had a moment when the father seems to figure this out, and he obstructs police procedure.

Yes. He takes responsibility, to let Jim go in and redeem himself, really. Which was an echo of my dad, who had, at my request, made arrangements with President Roosevelt's press secretary to have me removed from the infantry because I was so mauled by the training experience with all these guys who scared me to death. They came from the mountains of Arkansas and the toughest parts of Chicago. And so Dad made arrangements to move me into the Signal Corps in Beverly Hills. And all I had to do was sign a paper saying that I knew how to operate a 16mm camera. And I said, I can't, I don't know how. And Dad said, well, you can learn, sign the thing. But then I went out on maneuvers with these tough guys. And these guys I was so afraid of took me under their wing and taught me. When that two-week exercise was over, I came back and told my dad, "I want to stay in the infantry." And he said, are you sure? And I said, yes, I'm sure.

So even though it was a risk to your life to agree with you, your father let you go to war. And that became the scene where Jim's father says, Okay, go ahead into the planetarium and save Plato even if you die trying?

That's right. When my father got the telegram from the Secretary of the Army saying that his son was missing in action in the Battle of the Bulge, he had a major heart attack. So he had to retire, he had to give up his practice as a physician, and that was the end of his life, for all intents and purposes. So my father really gave me his life, to let me go over there.

So if that scene had stayed in, there would have been more of a sense of both the father and Jim Stark sacrificing them-

selves to possibly save Plato. Instead of, to take Biskind's reading of it, it's as if Jim's joined the establishment and Ray [the police officer] when Jim tricks Plato into giving him the bullets, and when Jim says, those are your friends out there, and leads Plato out to where he gets shot.

Ray Framek was Jim's father figure, he seemed to be the only one who understood both Jim and the situation he was facing with his parents. And he said, any time day or night I'm here. And so that's who Jim wanted to see. And that's why he went to the police. He didn't go there to rat on anybody, he went there to say, I don't know how to deal with this terrible thing that I've got inside, that I am in some way responsible for the death of this boy.

So it's a misreading of the film to equate Ray with the police, the same misreading that the gang had. Now, Jim Backus has said that Dean acted as a second director on this film.

I've heard that from other people, too. That's a big exaggeration, I think that comes from a guy who was used to a kind of professional attitude on the set where the director is the captain and nobody crosses him or adds anything. Jimmy explored everything. So did Nick. We had a big structure made of railroad ties out in the parking lot at Warner Brothers, and when Nick was rounding up actors to test for the gang, he'd take them there at night and have the place floodlighted, and they would improvise and use it as a kind of jungle gym. They would find their physical relationship to each other through improvisations. That's how he picked the gang.

"Warner's had guaranteed Nick Ray sole original story credit. I was shocked."

The gang functions almost like a Greek chorus. They're one entity that moves together like a bunch of panthers in a pack.

That was absolutely Nick's doing. He had had experience in the Group Theater, and he had the benefit of Kazan and Stella Adler and Lee Strasberg and all those giants of the theater, creating what then became the absolute source for everything we know about acting and playwriting today, because the Group gave birth to the Actors Studio. Nick had deep theatrical roots. I thought that his work with those kids in creating that knife fight, and the whole spirit of that gang, that thing that moved like wasps with a single mind, was remarkable. I'm in awe when I see that movie. But I get angry when the mother turns to the camera and says, "You just never know this can happen until it happens to you!" He wrote that when I wasn't there, not trusting the material. I just turned cold when I saw it.

The police station scene has a documentary feel. The camera roves around and glances at this or that. But other than that, the film is more symbolic than realistic.

It is. That scene is one of the things that Nick really felt strongly about from the beginning when we had our first real meeting. He made arrangements for me to go down to Juvenile Hall because he had done research there. He said, when you go down there I want you to notice something: there are glass rooms where everybody can see each other, and I think these kids should be introduced in the police station, seeing each other through the glass.

It aligns them all as troubled kids.

That's right. They're all pulled in from here or there. Nick said, I would love to be able to shoot from room to room and build these relationships visually. So it was a wonderful cinematic idea and a great help for a writer wondering how to begin a movie.

All three are different aspects of the same character. Plato, Jim and Judy are different facets of troubled adolescence.

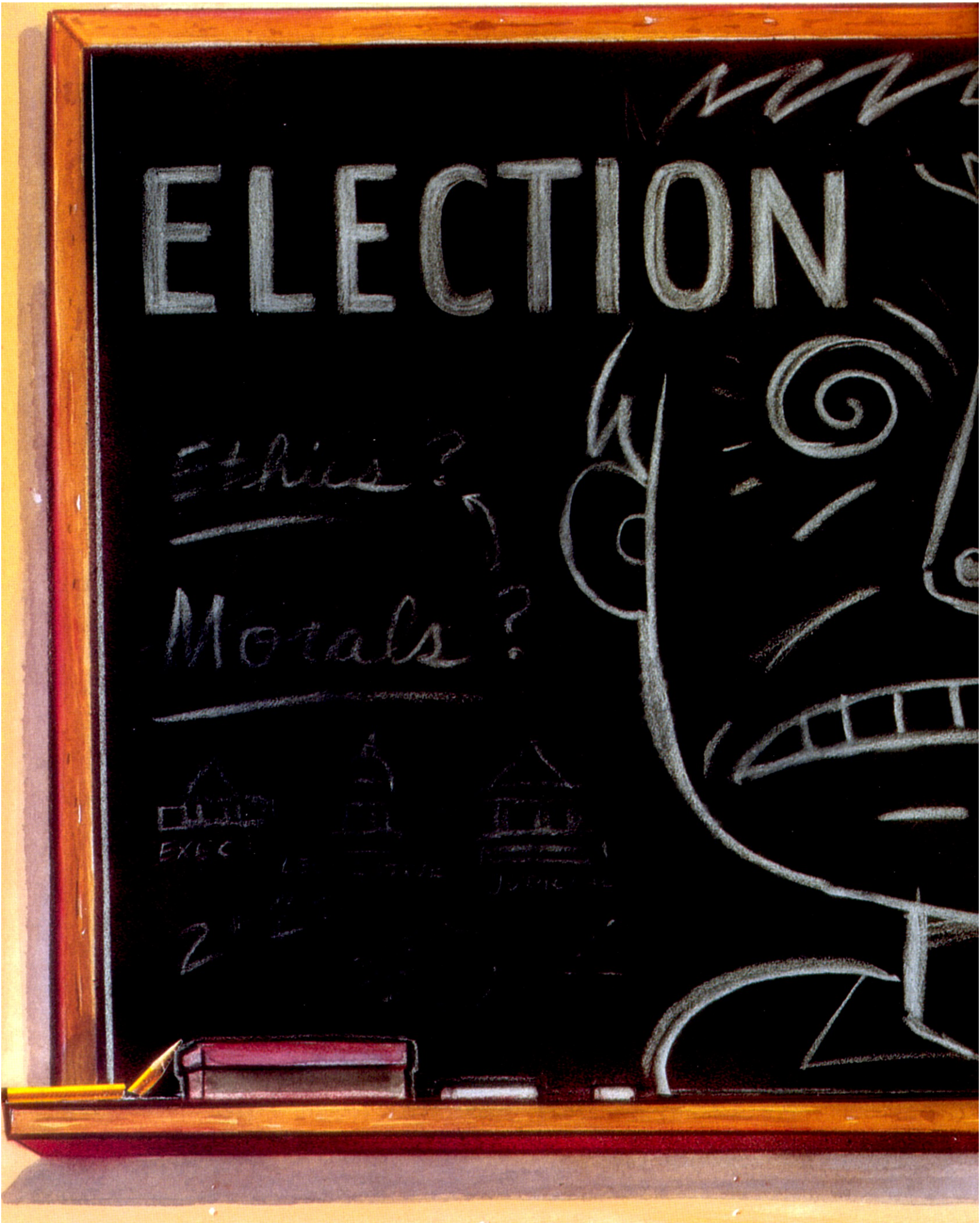
Plato is the physically abandoned one. Jim is abandoned by a father and not understood at all by a mother. Judy has the sexual ambiguity that happens when the daughter turns ripe and becomes a threat to the father because of his own, probably very natural desire for a beautiful woman, but thinks, I can't be feeling these things because it's my daughter. And I think it's probably a pretty common experience.

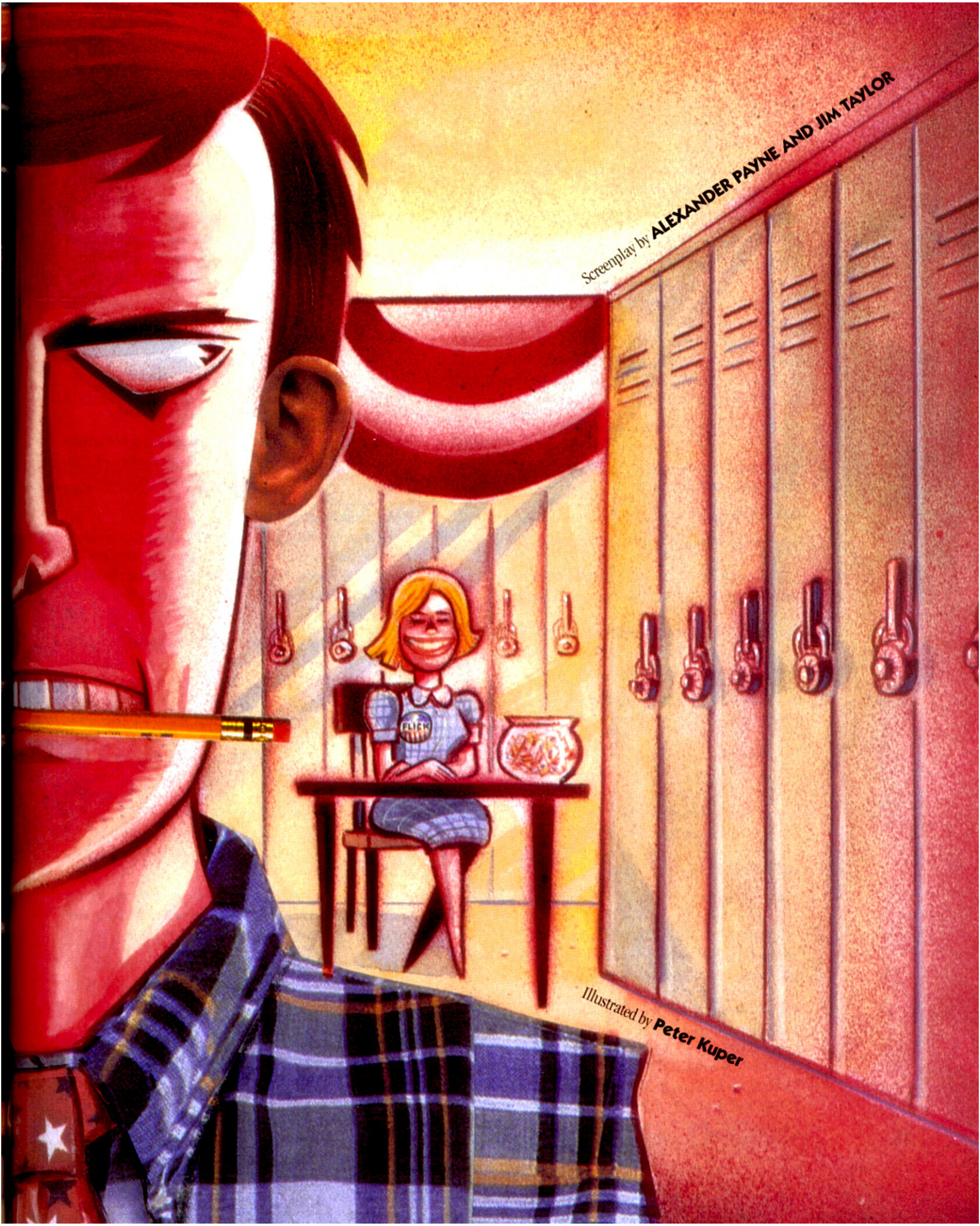
It feels quite radical for the time. Did Natalie Wood participate in the improvisational work?

I don't know whether she was out there with the gang or not. I think probably in the rehearsals. Nick's bungalow at the Chateau Marmont had somewhat the same configuration as the set of the Stark home, and it was a comfort zone for Natalie and Jim. Their relationship developed in the context of that room, and in the course of their work together, they did a lot of investigating—let's try this, let's try that. I'm sure that Natalie, as a movie star, was going through barriers that she had never been asked to go through before, because most movie directors don't work that way, they don't know what to do with rehearsal except from a technical point of view. It shook Hollywood up terribly in the '50s, when all the Actors Studio people came out, and suddenly there was Paul Newman, Jimmy Dean, Marlon Brando, Ben Gazzara, Joanne Woodward. Their imaginations had been trained to experience their own truth and communicate it to an audience in a surprising way. That's what made Brando so spectacular and Jimmy, too: the choices they made, the way they would pick up an object. For instance, I didn't have in the script that Natalie left her compact on that seat in Juvenile Hall. The payoff comes when Jim hands it to her, in an echo of her handing him the dirt on the bluff, and shows her the mirror and says, "See the monkey." I didn't write that. That grew from actors free enough to find moments that express thoughts better than dialogue. It's intimate. It refers to the monkey he had that night, to her leaving the compact, and finally recognizing that she saw him before. It opens, for her, the possibility of coming to him in the alley. That was the magic of that kind of training.

Dean was able to handle abstract lines. There's even a moment in the script when Buzz says to him, "You're abstract."

Continued on page 188


ELECTION
Ethics?
Morals?


Screenplay by ALEXANDER PAYNE AND JIM TAYLOR
Illustrated by Peter Kuper

EXT. CARVER FRONT STEPS – DAWN
The school stretches out before us, slumbering in the overcast morning air.

Along the front sidewalk, a lone JANITOR trundles a garbage bin filled with overstuffed Hefty bags.

A weathered FORD ESCORT pulls into the empty PARKING LOT and comes to a stop near the athletic field.

A TEENAGE GIRL'S VOICE –

TRACY *(V.O.)* None of this would have happened if Mr. McAllister hadn't meddled the way he did. He should have just accepted things as they are instead of trying to interfere with destiny. You see, you can't interfere with destiny. That's why it's destiny. And if you try to interfere, the same thing's going to happen anyway, and you'll just suffer.

JIM McALLISTER, a teacher in his mid- to late-thirties, emerges from the car in running clothes carrying a briefcase, gym bag, and coffee mug. On his way to the field, he crosses paths with the janitor.

JIM Morning, Lowell.

Lowell nods, hoists a bag and tosses it into a dumpster.

EXT. CARVER ATHLETIC FIELD – DAWN
JIM CIRCLES THE TRACK, sweating and panting.

ON THE GROUND Jim does sit-ups.

JIM Twenty-one . . . twenty-two . . .

He collapses onto his back. His head rolls to one side, and he glances past the fence at—

THE PARKING LOT
where a second CAR is just arriving. Jim watches as TRACY FLICK, a senior, and her MOTHER get out. The mother helps remove a CARD TABLE and a big plastic sack from the trunk before Tracy heads toward the school.

MOTHER (*Distant*) Good luck!

Jim turns his gaze toward the sky, closes his eyes, sighs.

INT. CARVER BOYS' LOCKER ROOM – DAY
Naked in the showers, Jim pumps liquid soap from the wall-mounted metal dispenser.

INT. CARVER HALL – DAY
THE LEGS OF A CARD TABLE –
as Tracy spreads them open and locks them into place.

STICKS OF GUM from a Plen-T-Pack are emptied into a FISHBOWL.

SCOTCH TAPE is wrapped around the end of a pen to attach a piece of string.

INT. CARVER BOYS' LOCKER ROOM – DAY
AT THE MIRROR Jim adjusts the knot of his tie, notices a little shaving cream in his ear.

INT. CARVER HALL – DAY
FOUR CLIPBOARDS with pens and lined sheets of paper are being placed in a row like little soldiers. The top of every sheet reads "Tracy Flick for President: Official Nomination Signatures."

INT. CARVER HIGH FACULTY LOUNGE – MORNING
AT THE REFRIGERATOR Jim tries to place his lunch inside, but the shelves are too crammed with old take-out containers. He opens one and smells it. Disgusted, he drags a garbage can over and begins throwing things away.

Lowell appears in the doorway wheeling his squeaky maintenance cart and watches Jim conduct his purge as A CHINESE FOOD BOX misses the can and rolls on the floor.

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – DAY
Tracy is seated behind her card table strategically placed near the school's main entrance. A sign taped to the wall behind her reads "TRACY FLICK FOR PREZ. SIGN UP FOR TOMORROW TODAY!" She checks her watch, readies herself.

Jim walks around the corner whistling vaguely.

TRACY Good morning, Mr. McAllister.

JIM Not wasting any time, are you, Tracy?

TRACY *(Chirping)* You know what they say about the early bird.

JIM Yes, I do.

An awkward moment passes between them.

JIM Well, good luck there, Tracy.

TRACY Thanks, Mr. M.

As Jim turns and walks away, Tracy watches him. He stops and picks up some litter, tosses it in a nearby garbage can.

TRACY *(V.O.)* I don't know why, Mr. McAllister had it out for me from the start. Oh sure, he was all smiles and good wishes and everything, but underneath he could be just as unfair and petty as anybody else.

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM – DAY
Alone in his room, Jim studies the *Omaha World-Herald.*

TRACY *(V.O.)* He'll probably tell you how committed he was to teaching and democracy and integrity and all. Don't be fooled.

This spread pages **1-7** of original script

After laying the paper down to circle an article, Jim leans back in his chair and momentarily loses himself in thought.

JIM *(V.O.)* It's hard to remember how the whole thing started, the whole election mess. What I do remember is that I loved my job. I was a teacher, an educator, and I couldn't imagine doing anything else.

Suddenly a VOICE—

VOICE *(O.S.)* Hey, Mr. M. Mr. M.!

Jim glances—

OUT THE WINDOW
and sees a kid – PAUL METZLER – pointing at him. Paul walks with a LIMP. Behind him, other STUDENTS approach the school.

PAUL Stop daydreaming! Get back to work!

Jim enjoys the affectionate joshing and gives the kid a wave. He returns to his newspaper, a contented man.

JIM *(V.O.)* The students knew it wasn't just a job for me.

EXT. CARVER FOOTBALL STADIUM – NIGHT
Jim sits in the bleachers, clapping his hands over his head.

JIM C'mon, wolverines! Defense! Let's hold 'em back!

JIM *(V.O.)* I got involved. And I cared.

INT. CARVER – GYM – DAY
AT A PEP RALLY – Jim is dressed as a WESTERN VILLAIN, and his black hat reads "Lincoln South." With a menacing grimace, he approaches a group of FOOTBALL PLAYERS at a poker table.

JIM *(V.O.)* And I think I made a difference.

INT. CARVER – A CORNER OF THE SCHOOL – DAY
Jim has a comforting hand on the shoulder of a CRYING GIRL.

JIM *(V.O.)* I knew I touched the students' lives during their difficult young-adult years, and I took that responsibility seriously.

INT. CARVER AUDITORIUM – NIGHT
Jim trots up the stairs to receive a plaque. He beams.

JIM *(V.O.)* In the twelve years I taught U.S. History, Civics and Current Events at Carver, I was voted Teacher of the Year three times—a school record.

INT. CARVER – JIM'S CLASSROOM – DAY
Mr. McAllister reads aloud from the newspaper as he paces in front of his class of high school juniors, Tracy Flick among them. The seats are arranged in a SEMI-CIRCLE.

JIM *(V.O.)* Standing in front of a room full of young people, trying to make them think—that's how I wanted to spend the rest of my life.

Jim slaps the newspaper for emphasis and addresses the class.

JIM So would this be an ethical situation or a moral situation? What's the difference between ethics and morals, anyway?

Tracy shoots her hand into the air. Jim notices but keeps looking around.

JIM Anybody.

Other hands rise tentatively.

JIM Derek.

DEREK Uh, ethics is like when you, uh, do what society tells you is right and morals are like, uh . . .

JIM You're on the right track. Who can help him out?

DEREK . . . morals are when . . .

Tracy's hand goes higher.

JIM Michelle?

MICHELLE Morals are like lessons, you know, like the moral of a story; it's what you learn from a story or a fable or something . . .

JIM Or a life experience. Good. And ethics?

MICHELLE That's more like, um . . . Ethics is how you use the morals . . . that you learn from a story?

Jim weighs the answer, tries to be encouraging.

JIM Okay. But we're still missing something key here. What are we missing?

TRACY *(Hand still raised)* I know.

JIM *(Finally)* Tracy.

TRACY Ethics are . . .

FREEZE FRAME on Tracy, her hand lowering, her mouth agape.

JIM *(V.O.)* Tracy Flick. Tracy Flick. I've never met anyone quite like Tracy Flick.

INT. CARVER STUDENT COUNCIL MEETING ROOM – DAY – TWO YEARS PREVIOUS
Jim sits to one side, monitoring the student council MEETING about to convene. A younger Tracy enters briskly and, unlike her casual teen comrades, has made

an attempt to dress for success. She takes a seat right up front and opens her backpack.

After preparing her notepad and pen, Tracy puts a MICROCASSETTE RECORDER on the table in front of her and pushes RECORD.

JIM *(V.O.)* She first showed up in my life as a freshman delegate in student council. I'd seen a lot of ambitious students come and go over the years, but I could tell right away Tracy Flick was different.

Jim observes Tracy, trying to size her up.

ON TRACY – putting all her little things in order, finally folding her hands to wait.

JIM *(V.O.)* It wasn't long before everyone knew who Tracy Flick was. She made sure of that. Her drive was astonishing. Even scary.

A FAST-PACED MONTAGE BEGINS UNDER TRACY'S VOICEOVER:

INSERT – CARVER HIGH YEARBOOK
It fans open to the INDEX.

PAN DOWN to Tracy's name followed by countless page references.

TRACY *(V.O.)* Some people say I'm an overachiever, but I think they're just jealous.

A page number turns BOLD, and the other numbers drop away.

Suddenly we are on that page, and we PAN to a headline: "Spanish Club says 'Olé!'"

PAN to the group shot and ZOOM in on Tracy smiling in a big SOMBRERO.

TRACY *(V.O.)* My mom always tells me I'm different—you know, special. And if you look at all the things I've accomplished so far, I think you'd have to agree.

We see Tracy on other pages too: "Yearbook Staff goes for it!" "Junior Achievers put on the dog!" "Student Council meets the challenge!" "Fiddler's a hit!"

TRACY *(V.O.)* Here I am as Hodel in *Fiddler on the Roof.*

The STILL of Tracy in the play suddenly COMES TO LIFE.

INT. CARVER HIGH AUDITORIUM – NIGHT
Onstage, Tracy wears a brunette wig and holds a broomstick as she sings. She is flanked by two other FEMALE STUDENTS (one African-American) playing her sisters.

TRACY *(Off-key)* "Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match . . ."

TV INSERT/INT. CAFETERIA – DAY
It's the closed-circuit school NEWS BROADCAST. Tracy is delivering a stand-up report from the crowded cafeteria. Her dress and make-up are an obvious if lame emulation of a professional newswoman.

TRACY *(V.O.)*And here I am on KMHS, our student-run TV station.

TRACY *(ON TV)* . . . that's why Principal Hendricks made the controversial announcement that the littering must stop. Tracy Flick reporting.

INT. CARVER STUDENT COUNCIL MEETING ROOM – AFTERNOON
A Student Council meeting is under way led by the president, TIM CROTTY. A girl, ASHLEY, is speaking. Jim observes from the side.

TRACY *(V.O.)*But it was in SGA, the Student Government Association, where I made my biggest mark. I never missed a meeting, and I volunteered for every committee as long as I could lead it.

Before Ashley can finish, Tracy STANDS UP.

TRACY I agree with Ashley. We should rent the barrels at least a day beforehand. What happened last time was a travesty. I mean, we were—

TIM CROTTY *(Trying to quiet her)* Yeah, no, I know, Tracy. That's why we're—Look, can we just take a vote on this?

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM – DAY
BACK TO TRACY still frozen mid-sentence, waiting to finish her answer.

JIM *(V.O.)* Now at the beginning of her senior year, Tracy was poised to win the presidency of the student body. And so far she was running unopposed.

TRACY COMES BACK TO LIFE

TRACY . . . the rules of conduct determined by a culture at a . . .

SHE FREEZES AGAIN

JIM *(V.O.)* Oh. There's one more thing about Tracy I think you should know.

INT. JIM'S TEACHER'S OFFICE – DAY
CLOSE ON DAVE NOVOTNY, another teacher in his mid-thirties.

DAVE Her pussy gets so wet you can't believe it.

WIDE – Dave is leaning across his desk to speak with Jim at an adjacent work area. They eat sack lunches.

JIM *(V.O.)* A few months before the election, she'd gotten herself in a little trouble with my best friend, Dave Novotny.

JIM Don't tell me that. I don't want to know that.

DAVE She's incredible. Everything just gets soaked.

INT. NOVOTNY RESIDENCE – DAY
Dun-dun-DUN . . . Dun-dun-DUN . . .
Jim and Dave are playing the opening notes of "Foxey Lady" through cheap, distorting amps. Jim plays bass. Dave plays guitar and sings into a microphone. They're bad. As in not good.

The basement is typical of a Midwest middle-class young couple – half storage and laundry, half makeshift rec-room.

JIM *(V.O.)* Dave came to Carver the year after I did, and we hit it off right away. We backed each other up in teachers' meetings and shared an interest in '60s music and micro-breweries.

CLOSE ON DAVE really getting into it, playing to an unseen stadium. Behind him, Jim is very careful with his chords.

JIM *(V.O.)* You could tell Dave was one of those guys who taught because they never wanted to leave high school in the first place, but basically he was a good guy.

DAVE *(Singing)* "Foxey . . . Foxey . . . You know you're a cute little heartbreaker . . . Foxey . . . You know you're a sweet little love maker . . . "

CAMERA DRIFTS toward the stairs leading up.

INT. NOVOTNY KITCHEN – DAY
CAMERA DRIFTS from the open basement stairway door and toward DIANE MCALLISTER and LINDA NOVOTNY seated at the kitchen table. They are fussing over little six-month-old DARRYL NOVOTNY in his highchair.

JIM *(V.O.)* Our wives became best friends too. And when Dave and Linda's son, Darryl, was born, they asked us to be godparents.

At a particularly grating note from downstairs, Diane gets up and closes the basement door.

INT. CARVER GEOMETRY CLASS – DAY
AN ISOSCELES TRIANGLE is being drawn on the blackboard and bisected. PULL OUT to reveal Dave explaining.

The class is taking notes, we zero in on a younger Tracy.

TRACY *(V.O.)* You probably think the worst—that Mr. Novotny was taking horrible advantage of one of his students, but it wasn't like that at all. Our relationship was based on mutual respect and admiration. I mean, during my sophomore year in geometry it was strictly professional between us—I mean, nothing.

This spread pages **7-13** of original script

EXT. GODFATHER'S PIZZA – NIGHT
The parking lot, the neon lights, the promise of good times.

TRACY *(V.O.)* It wasn't until junior year when we worked together on the yearbook that things got serious.

INT. GODFATHER'S PIZZA – NIGHT
Dave and Tracy are at a booth along with six other students.

TWO KIDS DISSOLVE OUT OF FRAME, and the others shift positions. Others continue to disappear in the same way, until only Dave and Tracy remain.

TRACY *(V.O.)* One night he took us editors out to celebrate after a deadline. Eventually Dave and I were left alone and we got to talking—not like teacher and student, but like two adults.

DAVE You know, Tracy . . . I don't know how to say this, but . . .

Dave's finger traces the rim of his frosty root beer mug.

TRACY But what?

DAVE Well, I notice you don't seem to have any close friends at Carver. You seem to be kind of a loner.

TRACY No, I'm not. I'm just really busy.

DAVE I know. I know it's not by choice. I just mean, well, being the kind of person you are, it must be really difficult to find someone you can talk to.

TRACY What do you mean? What kind of person am I?

DAVE What kind of person?

Dave looks directly into her eyes.

DAVE Tracy, I've been watching you for going on two years now, and I think you are one of the most talented, hard-working, sensitive, attractive, brilliant students—no, human beings—I have ever met. I mean, you're the real thing. Special.

TRACY *(Embarrassed, low)* Thank you.

DAVE And I know sometimes people like you have to pay a price for their greatness, and that price is loneliness.

Tracy nods in quiet recognition.

DAVE I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong. But it seems like you might need a friend.

INT. CARVER YEARBOOK OFFICE – DAY

A DOOR with cloudy glass and a stenciled sign: YEARBOOK OFFICE.

DISSOLVE
through the door and TRAVEL through an empty room to discover another door with a sign that reads DARKROOM.

TRACY *(V.O.)* Since I grew up without a dad, you might assume psychologically I was looking for a father figure.

DISSOLVE
through the darkroom door to find –

DAVE AND TRACY
bathed in red light. Tracy is sitting on Dave's lap as they make out hungrily.

TRACY *(V.O.)* But that had nothing to do with it at all. It was just that Dave was so strong and made me feel so safe and protected.

INT. DAVE'S CAR – DAY
Dave drives. Tracy sits in the passenger seat.

TRACY *(V.O.)* It was the first time somebody ever saw the real me, the me that nobody else knows.

DAVE *(Looking around)* Here, get down.

EXT. NOVOTNY DRIVEWAY – DAY
Dave wheels his car into the open garage. The automatic door closes behind him.

INT. NOVOTNY LIVING ROOM – DAY
Dave stands up from his squat at the STEREO, and the sexy sounds of Sade set the mood.

Tracy is seated awkwardly at one end of the sofa, a Diet Dr. Pepper in one hand. Dave walks slowly toward her, a sexy, knowing look in his eye. The music is sexy. Tracy is sexy. He's sexy. Keeping his eyes locked on Tracy's, he takes the pop can from her hand and takes a sip himself. Sexy.

INT. NOVOTNY STAIRCASE – DAY
Dave and Tracy walk up the stairs and down the hall. Dave enters the bedroom first, while Tracy pauses in the hall. His arm reaches out and pulls her inside.

INT. NOVOTNY BEDROOM – DAY
IN QUICK TIGHT CUTS we see Dave and Tracy DISROBING.

Tracy's head and naked shoulders lay themselves on Dave's pillow. She looks toward the foot of the bed at –

DAVE
unable to believe his eyes. He looks at Tracy up and down, up and down, his breath quickening. Sade wafts up the stairs.

DAVE Look at you.

He descends out of frame.

TRACY *(V.O.)* When I think back on my relationship with Mr. Novotny, what I miss most is our talks.

INT. NOVOTNY (DAVE'S) BASEMENT – DAY
Jim is riveted by Dave's story; he is both horrified and titillated.

JIM You did it at your house? Your own house?

DAVE Look, Jim . . . Okay. I know it all seems crazy, and maybe it did start out, you know, for the . . . for the sex and the danger. But now it's different. Jim, what I'm trying to tell you is that Tracy and I are totally, totally in love.

JIM In love?

DAVE Yeah, it's serious. I mean she inspires me in ways Linda never has. She even wants to read my novel.

JIM But you haven't written your novel.

DAVE That's the whole point. It's all in my head; it's right here. I just got to get it out there. Tracy wants me to write it so she can read it. It's beautiful. I know it should feel wrong, Jim, but it doesn't. It feels right.

JIM Dave, I'm just saying this as your friend. What you're doing is really, really wrong, and you've got to stop.

Dave draws a heavy sigh and buries his head in his hands—perhaps Jim has reached him. Perhaps not.

DAVE You're not just jealous, are you? I mean, we both used to talk about her.

JIM *(Exploding)* That was just talk! Fantasy talk! What are you, nuts? We talk about girls all the time, but it doesn't mean anything. I would never . . . I mean, I take very seriously our strict moral code. The line you've crossed is . . . it's immoral and it's illegal.

DAVE I don't need a lecture on ethics, Jim, okay? I know what—

JIM I'm not talking about ethics. I'm talking about morals.

CLICK. SQUEAK. STEP STEP STEP.

LINDA *(O.S.)* Peek-a-boo!

Linda comes down the basement stairs with Darryl in her arms.

DAVE *(To Jim, whispering)* Look, I appreciate your concern. I really do. But like I said, I got it under control.

As Linda approaches them, Dave rises to take Darryl, the perfect father: hug, tickle, kiss.

JIM *(V.O.)* I guess I don't have to tell you how all this turned out.

INT. CARVER PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE – DAY
CLOSE ON DAVE slumped in a chair. He is lost in agony: all he can do is look down and draw short, gasping breaths.

PRINCIPAL WALT HENDRICKS is at his desk, examining a little BOOKLET. Jim sits on the vinyl sofa.

CLOSE ON – the small makeshift booklet whose cover reads "There's a place for us" in overdone fancy cursive.

THE SECOND PAGE
shows a cutout from a travel magazine of a swanky BEACH-FRONT HOTEL. One room has been circled with the words "you and me" written next to it. Below: "A time and place for us." We HEAR Walt clearing his throat, swallowing.

THE THIRD PAGE
has glued to it a POSTCARD showing a couple hand-in-hand on the beach at sunset and reading "Maui is for lovers." Below: "Take my hand and we'll soon be there."

THE LAST PAGE
has a cutout of a bouquet of flowers. It reads, "Tracy, See you in paradise? Love, your 'teacher' David. P.S. I really, really need you now." The booklet is lowered.

DAVE *(Between sobs)* Tracy's mom—she doesn't understand.

WALT No, I'd say she doesn't. I don't think I've ever seen a mother quite so upset. We're all very, very lucky she doesn't want this public. *(Searching for words)* So tell me, Dave, honestly. I know what Tracy has told her mother, and what her mother has told me. But I want to hear it from you. Because I have a legal responsibility here. I need to know this, Dave. Did you cross the line with this girl?

Dave looks at Jim for help. Jim looks away. Dave's breaths grow more convulsive. Finally—

DAVE I . . . We . . . We're in love.

INT. NOVOTNY LIVING ROOM – DAY
Linda cradles Darryl while Dave grovels at her feet.

JIM *(V.O.)* After Dave got fired, Linda kicked him out of the house and filed for divorce.

LINDA Your novel? Are you fucking kidding me?

Dave follows Linda as she takes the baby into their bedroom and slams the door in Dave's face. Dave pounds on the door, eventually sinking to his knees and crying.

DAVE Linda! Linda! Lindaaa . . .

JIM *(V.O.)* He ended up moving back to Milwaukee to live with his parents. I haven't heard from him in a long time. I warned him, but he asked for it. He's lucky he's not in jail.

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM – DAY
Tracy, still frozen, THAWS OUT. Maybe now she can finish.

TRACY . . . certain time in history and—

RINGGGGG! Maybe not.

At the bell, students instantly shut their textbooks and collect their things.

JIM Okay. We'll pick up here next time.

Tracy is miffed as she puts her things away: slam, stuff, zip. She slings her backpack over her shoulder and heads toward the door. She looks back at—

MR. MCALLISTER
who himself now FREEZES as he talks to a couple of students.

TRACY *(V.O.)* Now that I have more life experience, I feel sorry for Mr. McAllister.

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM – DAY
Jim is at the blackboard finishing writing: EXECUTIVE, CONGRESSIONAL, JUDICIARY. He begins to draw a triangle connecting the three words.

DISSOLVE TO:
Jim at the blackboard finishing the same diagram but in DIFFERENT CLOTHES. He repeats this process TWO MORE TIMES.

TRACY *(V.O.)* I mean, anyone who's stuck in the same little room saying the exact same things year after year for his whole life, wearing the same stupid clothes, while his students go on to good colleges and move to big cities and do great things and make loads of money has got to be at least a little jealous. It's like my mom says—the weak always try to sabotage the strong.

Tracy turns and walks out the door.

INT. TRACY'S LIVING ROOM – DAY
CLOSE ON A SMILING LITTLE TRACY – in a Sears-style portrait. PAN across a wall full of other framed photos of Tracy accepting awards, dancing in a recital, poised to dive at a swim meet.

TRACY *(V.O.)* One thing that's important to know about me is that I'm an only child. So my mom is really devoted to me,

and I love her so much. She wants me to do all the things she wanted to do in life but couldn't.

AT THE DINING ROOM TABLE Tracy's mother, BARBARA FLICK, finishes a letter and puts it in an envelope.

TRACY *(V.O.)* See, mom used to be a stewardess for Braniff and now works as a paralegal. She likes to write letters to successful women like Janet Reno and Elizabeth Dole and ask them how they got to be where they are and what advice do they have for me, Tracy, her daughter.

CLOSE ON BARBARA'S TONGUE as the envelope flap slides across it.

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – DAY
A politician's SMILE plastered to her face, Tracy is at her card table vigorously gathering signatures.

TRACY *(V.O.)* Nine times out of ten they say you have to hold on to your dreams no matter what. The pressures women face mean you have to work twice as hard, and you can't let anything or anyone stand in your way.

A shabbily dressed BURNOUT—DOUG SCHENKEN—walks past and grabs a huge handful of gum.

TRACY One per person! Put those back!

Doug just keeps on walking away, and his two BUDDIES take great delight in his nimble-witted, quick retort.

DOUG SCHENKEN Eat me.

INT. CARVER LIBRARY – DAY
Tracy sits ALONE at her own table, while other students sit in groups around her. She is busy writing little numbers by her signatures.

TRACY Ninety-seven . . . ninety-eight . . .

TRACY *(V.O.)* But you know, winning isn't everything. If you play fair and follow all the rules thoroughly, you'll always come out ahead. Win or lose, ethical conduct is the most important thing. Just ask Mr. McAllister.

EXT. CARVER PARKING LOT – DAY
CLOSE ON TRACY'S EXCITED FACE –

TRACY Mr. McAllister? Mr. McAllister! Wait up!

Jim, his tie loose and his sleeves rolled up, looks up from unlocking his car. Tracy runs toward him holding out a TERM PAPER FOLDER.

TRACY I got all my signatures. One hundred and fifty-eight—way more than I need!

JIM Hey, that's super.

TRACY Here they are.

JIM You can put those in my box. I'll look at them tomorrow.

TRACY Could you approve them now? I'd like to kick off my campaign right away, you know, in the morning.

JIM *(Resigned)* Right.

He cursorily flips through the bound pages and offers them back to Tracy.

JIM Looks good to me.

TRACY Aren't you supposed to keep them?

JIM No, that's fine.

TRACY I thought you were supposed to keep them.

JIM Okay, fine. Sure.

Jim throws his briefcase and Tracy's folder into the backseat.

TRACY Thanks for everything.

JIM You bet.

Tracy stays put as Jim climbs in, shuts the door and fastens his seat belt.

TRACY *(Cheery, awkward)* I can't wait to start campaigning.

JIM Should be easy. So far no competition.

TRACY Well, you know, Coca-Cola's the world's number one soft drink, but they spend more money than anybody on advertising. I guess that's how come they stay number one.

JIM Yeah. Okay. Well, good luck, Tracy.

They exchange a long, curious stare. There's a tone at once confrontational and vaguely sexual about this moment.

TRACY You know, Mr. M., when I win the presidency, that means you and I are going to be spending a lot of time together. And I for one would like that time to be harmonious and productive. Wouldn't you?

JIM Sure.

TRACY Okay. That's good. I just wanted to make sure.

JIM Good luck, Tracy.

Jim pulls away and heads for the parking lot exit.

INT./EXT. JIM'S CAR – DAY
Jim drives stone-faced, unblinking. Something about the music on the radio mocks him.

JIM *(V.O.)* I don't blame Tracy for what happened with Dave. How could I? Dave was an adult more than twice her age.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT – DAY
Jim pulls to a stop next to a giant DUMPSTER.

Out of his window come yellowed newspapers, balled-up fast-food bags, and other detritus. He speeds away.

JIM *(V.O.)* Sure, she got on my nerves once in a while, but I admired Tracy. I really did.

INSIDE THE DUMPSTER we see Tracy's little bound book of signatures.

INT. MCALLISTER DINING ROOM – NIGHT
Jim and his wife Diane sit at their dining room table, eating chicken pot pies, baked potatoes with sour cream, salad with Lite Ranch dressing. Not a word passes between them.

JIM *(V.O.)* Thank God for Diane. She was my best friend, my source of love and strength. Oh sure, we'd had our share of bumpy times, but we'd always seen them through. After nine years of marriage, we were closer than ever. And the secret? Good communication.

DIANE Anything wrong?

JIM Everything's fine. Just, you know, school.

INT. MCALLISTER BEDROOM – NIGHT
Jim lies awake in bed while Diane snores beside him. Something seems to be echoing in his head.

TRACY'S VOICE *(An eerie whisper)* . . . You know, Coca-Cola's by far the number one soft drink . . . When I win the presidency, we're going to be spending a lot of time together . . . a lot of time . . . lots and lots and lots of time . . . president and advisor . . .

CLOSE ON JIM'S EAR as Tracy's LIPS magically whisper into it.

TRACY . . . harmonious and productive . . . close and special . . . you and I . . . so close . . . so intimate . . . together . . .

INT. MCALLISTER BASEMENT – NIGHT
In the darkness a light pops on, and Jim quietly pads down the stairs.

He opens an old CEDAR TRUNK, lifts out a few blankets and a piece of cardboard to reveal a row of PORNO TAPES cleverly concealed in the bottom of the trunk.

ON THE TV SCREEN – A FOOTBALL PLAYER in uniform and helmet filets a CHEERLEADER in a locker room.

Jim watches with detachment, as though watching the news. He sips a can of PEPSI. The football stud continues to bump and grind. Looking at his Pepsi can, Jim is suddenly inspired.

JIM *(Quietly)* Paul.

EXT. SKI SLOPE (REAR PROJECTION) – DAY
PAUL METZLER is SKIING in goggles and scarf. Behind him is a cheesy, dated rear projection of other skiers. Suddenly Paul loses his balance and FALLS.

CLOSE ON PAUL writhing in the snow.

PAUL Why . . . ? Why . . . ?

PAUL *(V.O.)* I was so mad at God when I broke my leg at Shadow Ridge over Christmas break.

INSERT – X-RAY LIGHT BOX
CLOSE ON AN X-RAY of a multiple FRACTURE.

PAUL *(V.O.)* The doctors told me I'd have to quit sports for at least a couple years if not forever.

INSERT – YEARBOOK PICTURE
Paul kneels in his FOOTBALL UNIFORM. The photograph erupts in flames, Bonanza-style.

PAUL *(V.O.)* . . . which meant no first-string quarterback in the fall. It was like the end of my life!

EXT. CARVER FRONT STEPS – DAY
Paul stands talking to FRIENDS in a very typical high school tableau. All wear backpacks or carry books. A GIRL kneels to sign his cast.

PAUL *(V.O.)* When I got back to school, everybody was so supportive, and they all wanted to sign my cast and everything . . .

EXT. MISSOURI RIVER LOOKOUT – DAY
Alone, Paul leans on his crutches and watches the river.

PAUL *(V.O.)* . . . but I still couldn't shake the feeling that now my life had no purpose. What did God want from me?

THE VAST MISSOURI – always flowing, never stopping, no beginning, no end.

PAUL *(V.O.)* Why did I exist?

INT. CARVER LIBRARY – DAY
Paul is sleeping slumped over a table, his head cradled on crossed arms. *The Celestine Prophecy* is open face-down next to him.

PAUL *(V.O.)* Sometimes you can search everywhere for answers. Then one day destiny just taps you on the shoulder. I know, because it happened to me.

A FINGER
reaches down and taps Paul's shoulder. Paul comes to and looks – it's Mr. McAllister.

JIM Paul, could I talk to you for a minute?

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – DAY
His arm on Paul's shoulder, Jim walks Paul down a deserted hall and into Jim's classroom. Jim picks up some scrap paper off the floor and puts it in the proper place.

PAUL *(V.O.)* Mr. McAllister changed my life. And no matter what they say he did or did not do, I believe he is a good man.

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM – DAY
Paul sits in a chair, while Jim stands.

JIM Paul, I know you've been pretty down since your accident.

PAUL I wanted to play next year so bad I could taste it. And maybe go on to—

JIM I know. I understand disappointment. I really do.

PAUL Yeah.

JIM But you've got a big choice right now. You can choose to be depressed about it for the rest of your life. Or you can choose to see it for what it really is: an opportunity. I personally think you have a big future ahead of you, and I don't mean the fleeting glory of sports.

PAUL What do you mean?

JIM Let me give you a clue. You're a born leader. You're one of the most popular students at Carver. You're honest and straightforward. You don't choke under pressure, as we all saw in that amazing fourth quarter against Westside. The other kids look up to you. What does that spell?

Paul furrows his brow and looks around, searching for an answer. His lower lip is wet.

JIM Student . . . council . . . president.

It takes a moment for this to sink in. Finally—

PAUL Who, me? Nooo. I never . . . I don't know anything about that stuff, Mr. M. Besides, that's Tracy Flick's thing. She's always working so hard and—

JIM Yeah, no, she's a go-getter, all right.

PAUL And she's super-nice.

JIM Yeah. But one person assured of victory kind of undermines the whole idea of a democracy, doesn't it? That's more like a . . . well, like a dictatorship, like we studied.

PAUL But—

JIM Paul, what's your favorite fruit?

PAUL Huh? Oh. Uh . . . pears.

Jim takes a piece of chalk from the lip of the blackboard.

JIM Okay, let's say—

PAUL No, wait—apples. Apples.

Jim draws illustrative circles on the board as he speaks.

JIM Fine. Let's say all you ever knew was apples. Apples, apples and more apples. You might think apples were pretty good, even if you occasionally got a rotten one. Then one day there's an orange. And now you can make a decision. Do you want an apple, or do you want an orange? That's democracy.

PAUL I also like bananas.

JIM Exactly. So what do you say? Maybe it's time to give a little something back.

INT. CARVER STUDENT COMMON AREA – DAY
Tracy directs her friend ERIC OVERHOLDT on a ladder as he hangs a large POSTER high on a wall.

TRACY The right side is too high. The right side. Just a smidge.

Suddenly she notices a small COMMOTION in the adjacent cafeteria and goes to investigate.

INT. CARVER CAFETERIA – DAY
A small crowd of students compete to sign Paul's nomination petition taped to the wall.

GUY *(Signing)* Hey, Paul, you going over to Anthony's on Friday, or what did you decide?

PAUL I gotta talk to him first.

Tracy watches the hubbub, none too pleased, and pushes her way to the front of the group.

TRACY Who put you up to this?

PAUL Huh? Oh, hi, Tracy.

Tracy stares at him.

TRACY Who put you up to this?

PAUL What do you mean?

TRACY You just woke up this morning and suddenly decided to run for president?

PAUL No. Uh . . . I just . . . you know, I just thought—

TRACY Thought what?

PAUL Well, see, I was talking to Mr. McAllister about my leg and everything . . . and how I still want to, you know, do something for the school and—

TRACY So Mr. McAllister asked you to run.

PAUL Well, I mean, you know, I talked to him and every-

thing, but he just said he thought it was a good idea . . . and how there's all different kinds of fruit and . . . It's nothing against you, Tracy. You're the best. I just thought—

TRACY Okay, Mr. Popular. You're on.

With that, Tracy turns and SIGNS Paul's sheet. The "i" in "Flick" is dotted with a STAR.

CLOSE ON TRACY'S FACE – as she walks away, Paul and his fans receding behind her. Although she tries to hide it, we can see that she's threatened.

TRACY *(V.O.)* You might think it upset me that Paul Metzler had decided to run against me, but nothing could be further from the truth. He was no competition for me: it was like apples and oranges. It just meant I had to work a little harder, that's all.

INT. TRACY'S BASEMENT – NIGHT
CLOSE ON TRACY'S FACE – in a Xeroxed photograph. "Vote Tracy!" is written at the bottom.

Tracy is making campaign buttons with her BUTTON MACHINE. She manufactures her buttons with almost alarming intensity. PATRIOTIC MUSIC begins to rise.

TRACY *(V.O.)* You see, I believe in the voters. They understand that elections aren't just popularity contests. They know this country was built by people just like me who work very hard and don't have everything handed to them on a silver spoon.

THE TRACY BUTTONS
drop one by one into a box. All the little round Tracys smile up at us.

EXT. CARVER PARKING LOT – DAY
Paul is in the driver's seat of his bitching big-wheeled PICKUP TRUCK. His door is open, and his radio blasts a SONG. Various F.O.P.s (Friends of Paul's) hang around.

Alone behind a dirty window, Tracy watches the scene from her seat on the SCHOOL BUS.

TRACY *(V.O.)* Not like some rich kids who everybody likes because their fathers own Metzler Cement and give them trucks on their sixteenth birthday and throw them big parties all the time. They don't ever have to work for anything.

The bus pulls away.

INT. TRACY'S BASEMENT – AFTERNOON
CLOSE ON TRACY'S FACE – staring into camera as she exercises on a NORDIC TRAC. Drenched in sweat, she moves in a hypnotic frenzy.

TRACY *(V.O.)* They think they can all of a sudden one day out of the blue waltz right in with no qualifications whatsoever and try to take away what other people have worked for very, very hard their entire lives. No, it didn't bother me at all!

INT. PAUL'S PICKUP – DAY
Paul drives home, his stereo thumping. Silent, he appears lost in thought, as though a little gopher idea were burrowing its way to the surface. Oh, look – there's its snout now.

PAUL Paul . . . Paul . . . power . . . Paul . . . Paul for President . . . progress . . . promise . . . peanut . . . Paul-i-tics . . . yeah . . . President Paul . . . Punt for Paul! No.

EXT. METZLER HOME – DRIVEWAY – DAY
Paul pulls into the driveway and hops out of his car.

INT. METZLER – TAMMY'S BEDROOM – DAY
Two GIRLS are kissing on the bed. They are TAMMY METZLER and LISA FLANAGAN, fifteen and seventeen, respectively. Lisa breaks away. Tammy tries to kiss her again, but Lisa resists.

TAMMY *(Softly)* What?

LISA I told you . . . I can't. I just—It doesn't feel right anymore, you know?

INT. METZLER KITCHEN – DAY
Whistling a cheerful tune, Paul tosses his backpack on a chair, grabs a banana, and opens the refrigerator.

INT. METZLER – TAMMY'S BEDROOM – DAY
Tammy is still trying to comfort Lisa.

TAMMY If you could just get out of your head.

Tammy leans forward, puts her palm on Lisa's cheek. Lisa looks at Tammy as though at a stranger. Tammy leans forward and kisses Lisa's eyes. Lisa jerks her head out of Tammy's hands.

LISA I said no!

Suddenly, there's a quick KNOCK at the door, and Paul enters. The girls rise quickly.

PAUL Hey, Tammy, guess what happened today.

TAMMY Don't you fucking knock?

PAUL Yeah. So guess what happened. So Mr. McAllister, he—*(Noticing Lisa)* Oh hi, Lisa.

TAMMY Paul, get out!

PAUL So Mr. M. calls me in and tells me—

LISA I gotta go.

Lisa pushes her way past Paul and runs down the hall.

TAMMY *(To Paul)* You dumb shit!

PAUL What'd I do?

THE SCENE FREEZES.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* You know how they say one day a big meteor might come and crash into the Earth and kill everybody? Well, I think that would be a good thing.

BACK TO LIFE – Tammy turns away from Paul in disgust and runs after Lisa.

INT. METZLER LIVING ROOM AND FOYER – CONTINUOUS
Tammy finds the front door flung open and through it sees Lisa slamming the door of her beat-up Honda Civic and starting the engine.

TAMMY Lisa!

EXT. METZLER'S STREET – CONTINUOUS
Tammy runs up to the car as it pulls away. She pounds on the window.

TAMMY Stop! Wait!

Lisa stops the car, rolls down the window.

TAMMY Where're you going?

LISA I'm not like you.

TAMMY What . . . ?

LISA I'm not a dyke, okay, and we're not in love. We were just . . . I was just experimenting.

Lisa speeds away, and we watch her car grow smaller and smaller.

CLOSE ON TAMMY'S FACE – as we see the greatest disappointment of her short life break across her face.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* How can something that seems so true turn out to be such a lie?

EXT. ELMWOOD PARK – DAY
Lisa and Tammy are swinging synchronized on a swingset, smiling and laughing. The image is slightly OVEREXPOSED as though to suggest an ideal memory.

CLOSE ON TAMMY looking over at Lisa.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* I mean Lisa and I were destined to be together. It was so obvious. Of all the people on the planet who had ever lived, somehow we'd found each other.

CLOSE ON LISA in SLOW MOTION, swinging next to us. She looks back, her face so happy.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* Lisa . . .

INT. METZLER KITCHEN – DAY
CHOMP-CHOMP-CHOMP Tammy eats an asparagus spear.

GNAW-GNAW-GNAW Lisa eats an asparagus spear.

TAMMY
drinks a big glass of water. She giggles a little.

LISA
drinks a big glass of water. She giggles too.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* I remember one time Lisa and I did an experiment with asparagus to see how long it takes your pee to smell. We peed a little every five minutes.

AN EGG TIMER: Ding! Tammy and Lisa, very serious now, smell little Dixie cups.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* For her it took about fifteen minutes, and for me it was twenty.

INT. LIBRARY – DAY
Lisa studies at a table, surrounded by other busy students.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* Every day I found some new way to tell Lisa I loved her.

Suddenly Tammy walks by, drops a folded NOTE in front of Lisa, and walks on. Lisa opens it.

NOTE *(V.O.)* If you died right now, I would throw myself into one of my Dad's cement trucks and get poured into your tomb.

Lisa looks over her shoulder at Tammy, who is now at the door of the library. Tammy nods at her with quiet loving reassurance.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* But it just seemed like the closer we got, the more she pulled away.

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – DAY
Lisa watches Tammy open her locker and notices a four-frame PHOTO-BOOTH PHOTOGRAPH taped to the inside of the door. In the photos Lisa and Tammy are clowning and smooching. Lisa reaches over and YANKS the photos off the door.

LISA Are you crazy?

TAMMY What?

LISA People can see this.

TAMMY So?

LISA These are private—these are for us.

This spread pages **26-35** of original script

TAMMY I know.

LISA But other people can see them too.

TAMMY I don't care.

LISA Well, I do.

Lisa walks away with the photos.

EXT. ELMWOOD PARK – DAY
CLOSE ON LISA SWINGING – next to us, a final reprise of Tammy's favorite memory.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* What did I do to make her change? What's wrong with me?

Lisa swings out of frame, and the swing returns EMPTY.

TAMMY *(V.O.) (A whisper)* Lisa.

EXT. HILL ABOVE A POWER PLANT – TWILIGHT
Tammy sits on a promontory overlooking an Omaha Public Power District station – towers, wires, insulators, a loud HUM.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* Sometimes when I'm sad, I sit and watch the power station.

Tammy lifts a pair of BINOCULARS to her eyes, sees—

THE POWER PLANT.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* They say if you lie between two of the main wires, your body just evaporates. You become a gas. I wonder what that would feel like.

EXT. METZLER'S STREET – EVENING
Lisa's car speeds away, growing smaller and smaller. We're back at the BREAK-UP.

CLOSE ON TAMMY'S FACE – as she stares down the street, unable to move. It starts to rain. Tears roll down her cheeks, mixing with the rain. Very French, very sad.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* I don't know what I did to make Lisa hate me so much, but somehow she decided to hurt me. And she knew exactly what to do.

INT. LISA'S BEDROOM – DAY
CLOSE ON PAUL'S FACE – matched in size to Tammy's. He is moaning, gasping.

FROM OVERHEAD – Paul is sprawled on Lisa's bed, surrounded by stuffed animals. His legs dangle over the edge of the bed, and Lisa kneels between them, her head bobbing up and down.

PAUL *(V.O.)* I sure was surprised the day Lisa Flanagan asked me for a ride home and ended up blowing me.

Lisa pauses and looks up at Paul.

LISA I've wanted this for so long.

She resumes with renewed vigor.

PAUL Uhhh . . . teeth. Teeth.

LISA Sorry.

INT. CARVER CAFETERIA – DAY
Paul and Lisa sit with some other friends at a lunch table. Paul has one arm around Lisa as he eats with his other hand.

PAUL *(V.O.)* Life is so weird. First, Lisa has a big fight with my sister, and the next thing you know she's my girlfriend.

Lisa turns around to look at—

TAMMY
seated at another table directly behind them. She and Lisa lock eyes before they both turn around again.

EXT. CARVER FOOTBALL STADIUM – DAY
Paul poses for a campaign photo in his football uniform. He freezes in position as though about to throw a pass. Lisa adjusts his position – CLICK.

PAUL *(V.O.)* Since Lisa knew all about public relations and stuff, she offered to help me with my campaign. We made a great team!

Tammy spies from underneath the bleachers.

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – DAY
Paul is on all fours as Lisa stands on his back to hang a poster with Paul's football picture reading: "Paul Metzler – You Bet-zler!"

PAUL *(V.O.)* It seemed so natural, the two of us together. It was like destiny.

Tammy watches from a nearby classroom door, her nose and cheek pressed against the window.

EXT. LISA'S HOUSE FRONT – DAY
Paul's truck pulls up, and Paul and Lisa get out.

PAUL *(V.O.)* That spring was perfect. My leg wasn't bugging me too much, and the weather was so nice. And every afternoon after school, Lisa and I would go to her house to fuck and have a swim. It was like we were in a world all our own.

Tammy emerges from behind a tree. She's on her bike. Angry and fragile, she watches the couple enter Lisa's house.

EXT. LISA'S BACKYARD – DAY
Tammy peeks OVER THE FENCE and sees –

LISA AND PAUL
swimming. Paul dives off the board and resurfaces right into Lisa's arms.

MOVE CLOSER TO TAMMY as she dies a thousand deaths.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* I had to do something. I didn't know what, but I had to do something.

FADE OUT

EXT. NOVOTNY BACKYARD – DAY
A laughing BABY BOY is lowered into frame and pulled back up again. Then he swings across frame. It's little DARRYL NOVOTNY.

WIDE – Jim has Darryl by the ankles and is swinging him between his legs. Diane and Linda are setting the picnic table. Stacked charcoal briquettes burn off in a nearby barbecue.

JIM *(V.O.)* Around that time Diane and I were hanging out a lot at Linda Novotny's house, giving her our love and support and helping her make it through a difficult time.

DIANE Jim, don't. You're scaring him.

JIM He likes it.

Darryl's laughter suddenly turns into CRYING.

DIANE Here. Give him to me. *(As she takes Darryl)* Is little Darryl dizzy? That's it . . . come here . . .

LINDA You got him?

DIANE Yeah.

Linda heads into the house. Jim watches her walk, then turns toward Diane and Darryl. It's as though Diane, not Linda, were the infant's real mother, so loving and attentive is she, so swelled with maternal piety.

JIM *(V.O.)* Diane really wanted to have kids—and so did I—but it seemed like there was always a reason to wait: she had to finish nursing school, I had to get my master's, we needed a new house, we needed more money. Finally we just decided to go for it . . .

INT. JIM'S BEDROOM – NIGHT
A DIGITAL THERMOMETER reads 99.3. Behind it Diane lies in bed reading a copy of *Self.*

JIM *(V.O.)* . . . but for over a year we hadn't had any luck. And Diane was getting desperate.

INT. MCALLISTER HOME OFFICE – NIGHT
At his desk, Jim studies a *High Society* magazine. He is naked.

Jim closes his eyes and bites his lip as though feeling something he wished not to leave him. He quickly replaces a stack of magazines in his desk and goes across the hall to –

INT. MCALLISTER BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS
– where Diane waits in bed. She puts aside her magazine and welcomes Papa Bear. Jim closes the door behind him.

INT. MCALLISTER BEDROOM – LATER
Jim and Diane copulate. Although ostensibly near climax, Jim seems to be struggling. Diane's exhortations, once forbidden and exciting, now seem routine.

DIANE You gonna do it? You gonna do it?

JIM Yeah, uh, just a minute.

DIANE Come on, do it. Do it. Fill me up. Come on, fill me up.

JIM Yeah, just—

DIANE Do it!

Jim finally climaxes.

DIANE Okay!

With that, Jim rolls off of her. Diane immediately hoists her knees to her chest.

CLOSE ON JIM – on his side of the bed facing away from Diane.

DIANE Could you hand me the remote?

EXT. NOVOTNY BACKYARD – AS BEFORE
Jim is snapped out of his reverie by Linda's voice.

LINDA Say, Jim. Jim.

Jim looks. Linda is walking out the patio door holding a big bottle of wine with a corkscrew sticking out of it.

LINDA Could you get this? I can't—

JIM Sure.

Jim takes the bottle. CLOSE ON the neck as the cork emerges: POP!

INT. NOVOTNY KITCHEN – DAY
Linda stands at the base of a stepladder as Jim climbs up and points to a spot on the ceiling.

JIM *(V.O.)* Without Dave around, Linda needed a lot of help around the house.

JIM Here?

LINDA *(Indicating)* More this way.

This spread pages **35-41** of original script

JIM Okay. Give me the drill.

Jim looks down at Linda as she hands it up. Her blouse reveals a bit more than it should, and Jim pauses to get an extra glimpse.

THE POWER DRILL BIT
penetrates the ceiling.

EXT. NOVOTNY DRIVEWAY – DAY
A shirtless Jim is MOWING the lawn on a hot day. He shuts it off as Linda emerges from the house with lemonade. She wears culottes, a halter top, and flip-flops.

JIM *(V.O.)* I'd always liked Linda, but we'd never had a chance to spend any time alone together. Now with Dave out of the picture, I began to see what an incredibly sensitive and giving person she was.

Jim downs his glass in big thirsty gulps and hands her back the glass. He watches her walk back to the house.

JIM *(V.O.)* Plus she had finally dropped all that weight from her pregnancy, and she looked really great.

THE RIPCORD
of the lawnmower is pulled a couple of times until it starts.

INT. YOUNKERS DEPARTMENT STORE – DAY
IN WOMEN'S ACCESSORIES – Linda looks at herself in the mirror modeling a colorful floppy hat. She spins around for Jim's approval.

JIM *(V.O.)* We got to be kind of like buddies. I even took her to the mall one time while her car was in the shop.

Jim smiles and nods. She puts on another. Linda is like a young girl on a date. She grabs Jim's hand and pulls him in another direction.

AT THE MAKE-UP COUNTER – Linda spreads on lipstick.

LINDA What do you think?

It's clear what Jim thinks.

JIM You look great.

INT. JIM'S CAR – DAY
They're driving home. There are packages on Linda's lap and in the backseat.

LINDA I can't afford this stuff right now.

JIM Oh, come on. You've had a hard year, you're cooped up with the kid all the time. Let go; live a little.

LINDA You sure?

They come to a stop at a red light. Out one window Jim spots a MOTEL.

JIM So what do you think? Should we get a room?

LINDA Should we get a what?

Jim points at the motel.

LINDA Oh.

Her smile fades, and she stares straight ahead. There's an icy, uncomfortable silence.

LINDA *(Stiffly)* That's not funny.

The light changes. Jim swallows, accelerates.

INT. JIM'S KITCHEN – DAY
Jim walks in through the back door. Diane is loading the dishwasher. They peck-kiss.

DIANE How'd it go?

JIM Fine. You know. We just went to Crossroads.

DIANE You guys have fun?

Jim picks an apple out of a bowl.

JIM *(Between bites)* Yeah. No. I mean, you know.

DIANE What?

JIM Well, Linda's great. But she can be a little much sometimes.

INT. MCALLISTER BEDROOM – NIGHT
Diane lies facedown, and Jim is on top of her. Jim makes spirited love with her.

DIANE Oh, Jim! Oh, God!

LINDA'S HEAD, like a cutout from a tabloid cover, floats in from offscreen and lands on the back of Diane's head. At the right moment, her face COMES TO LIFE and vaguely mouths the words that Diane is saying, like a badly dubbed movie.

DIANE/LINDA Oh, God. Just like that. Oh yes. Fill me up . . .

Jim's wicked desire increases with each movement.

Now TRACY FLICK'S FACE floats over and replaces Linda's. Tracy mouths Diane's words.

DIANE/TRACY Do it, Jim. Fuck me.

Jim is at once in deep-space ecstasy and surprised at himself. Diane's voice now changes: it's Tracy's VOICE.

TRACY *(O.S.)* Fuck me, Mr. McAllister!

FADE OUT

UNDER BLACK –

JIM *(V.O.)* So like I was saying, things were going pretty well in my life.

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – DAY
It's passing period, and hundreds of students clog the halls.

JIM *(V.O.)* . . . that is, until things started going all haywire with that damn election.

A distant DING-DING grows louder and louder. Everyone turns toward the source, far down the hall, and eventually TAMMY emerges wearing a makeshift SANDWICH BOARD that reads "Tammy Metzler For President." Smiling a perverse smile, she rings a hand bell, Salvation Army-style.

Paul is at his locker and watches Tammy go by.

PAUL Tammy? Tammy, what are you doing?

Tammy ignores her brother and keeps walking directly toward us, finally INTO CAMERA.

INT. CARVER (JIM'S) TEACHERS' OFFICE – DAY
Tracy sits opposite Mr. McAllister.

TRACY You're the advisor. You should stop her. She's not qualified. She's just a sophomore.

JIM Calm down, Tracy. Just calm down.

TRACY Are you sure all her signatures are real? It's not easy to get all those signatures.

JIM As far as I know, they—

Suddenly LISA AND PAUL are sitting where Tracy was.

PAUL We can't both run, can we? We're brother and sister. Can we?

LISA It's a conflict of interest. And Paul was first.

JIM Anyone who gets signatures in on time can run. And she got in just under the wire. Nothing I can do.

Now TRACY replaces Lisa and Paul.

TRACY Let me see them. Let me see them.

Sighing, Jim fishes in his drawer and hands Tracy some sheets.

TRACY These are a bunch of burnouts. And look at this one, I can't even read this one.

JIM *(Taking the sheet)* Looks like Tim Kobza.

LISA AND PAUL again.

LISA She's doing this to get back at me.

PAUL For what?

LISA I mean at you.

PAUL For what?

LISA I don't know. You're her brother. You should know.

TRACY returns.

TRACY Tim Kobza? Tim Kobza! Who's he? I've never heard of him!

JIM Look, why don't we just forget about Tammy? We'll have the assembly tomorrow, everybody'll make their speeches, and I'm sure everything will be fine.

INT. CARVER GYM – DAY
The entire student body is assembled on the bleachers. There is a palpable mood of boredom and apathy.

JERRY SLAVIN, a handicapped kid in a wheelchair, is at the microphone. His head lists to one side, and he takes long breaths as he speaks.

JERRY I love Carver High, and I will be a dedicated vice president. A vote for Jerry Slavin is a vote for good government. And even if I can't really stand up for you, I will. *(Cracks himself up)* Thank you.

Jerry motors away amid scattered applause and coughs. Jim steps forward, clapping, and raises the mike.

JIM Thank you, Jerry, and good luck. Again, Jerry is running unopposed for vice president. So we'll move on now to the presidential race with three candidates running. The first in alphabetical order is Tracy Flick.

Tracy steps forward with a small stack of index cards. During her speech she flips the cards over one by one but rarely looks at them.

TRACY Poet Henry David Thoreau once wrote, "I cannot make my days longer, so I strive to make them better." With this election, we here at Carver also have an opportunity to make our high school days better. During this campaign I have had the opportunity to speak with many of you about your concerns. I spoke with freshman Eliza Ramirez, who told me how alienated she feels from her own homeroom. I spoke with sophomore Reggie Banks, who said his mother works in a cafeteria and can't afford to buy him enough spiral notebooks for his classes. I won't bore you with long-winded promises about all the new and innovative things I will definitely achieve during the year in which it will be my honor and privilege to represent each and every one of you, but I can say that my years of experience on the student council have taught me the three most important attributes the president needs to possess: commitment—

DOUG SCHENKEN Eat me!

DOUG'S BUDDY Eat me raw!

There is scattered laughter. Tracy pauses. Walt Hendricks bounds up and grabs the mike.

This spread pages **42–48** of original script

WALT If you can't be adults and give these candidates the courtesy they deserve, then you don't deserve to be called adults but children. Because that's what children are. And you'll be treated like children. So let's all listen up.

Walt backs away to his seat. Tracy resumes.

TRACY The three most important attributes the president needs to possess are: commitment, qualifications, and experience. I'll add one more: caring. I care about Carver, and I care about each and every one of you, and together we can all make a difference. One of the things I would like to establish is a regular open forum where any student can come and voice their concern about issues we face here at Carver. I and the rest of the student council would then interface with the faculty and staff, so a continuous dialogue would exist.

Walt whispers to Jim.

WALT I'd say she knows a thing or two about student-faculty dialogue.

Jim nods solemnly.

TRACY When you cast your vote for Tracy Flick next week, you won't just be voting for me. You'll be voting for yourself and for every other student. Our days won't be any longer, but they can sure be better. Thank you.

Tracy smiles and walks back to her folding chair. There is polite applause and a few whistles. Jim comes back to the microphone.

Tracy takes her seat next to Paul and glances at him. Paul stares straight ahead, a fat bead of sweat on his forehead. One of his legs is jiggling.

JIM The next candidate for student body president is Paul Metzler. Paul?

Paul awkwardly makes his way to the mike. Though by no means thunderous, his applause clearly exceeds Tracy's. A small cluster of jocks "woof" for him, shaking their fists in the air. Paul manages a weak grin for his buddies.

Tracy shifts in her chair, her smile stiff and forced.

Lisa smiles and nods at Paul from the bleachers, giving him encouragement and a silent reminder to remember what they talked about.

Tammy's eyes dart between Lisa and Paul. She shows no emotion, reveals nothing.

The applause quickly dies, and after a moment Paul remembers to look at the white paper in his hand. He speaks in a barely audible monotone, never once glancing up.

PAUL As many of you know I broke my leg pretty bad this year and the experience has made me reevaluate what I want to do with my life and that is help people when you think about it a school is more than a school it's our second home where we spend all our time and grow as individuals and a community but is our school everything it could be I want our school to reach its true potential that is why I am running for president.

Jim pinches the bridge of his nose, clearly pained.

A few loud SOUND EFFECT SNORES saw through the air, and Walt points a stern finger at—you guessed it—Doug Schenken.

PAUL I know what it is to fight hard and win like when we almost went to state last fall and I threw that fourth-quarter pass against Westside for the touchdown that won the game by three points I won't let you down like I didn't then I promise we can all score a winning *(Big breath)* touchdown together. Vote Paul Metzler for president thank you.

Paul now gets considerably less applause, but his jock friends remain loyal.

JIM Okay, Paul. Now our final candidate for president—another one of the Metzler "clan"—Sophomore Tammy Metzler.

Tammy approaches the mike. There are scattered mocking whistles and catcalls.

Tammy calmly looks over the crowd, waiting for the jeers to subside. She makes eye contact with Lisa, who stares back.

WALT People. People!

The room quiets down. Tammy puts her lips close to the mike.

TAMMY Who cares about this stupid election?

Now there's something worth listening to.

TAMMY We all know it doesn't matter who gets elected president of Carver. You think it's going to change anything around here, make one single person happier or smarter or nicer? The only person it matters to is the one who gets elected. The same pathetic charade happens every year, and everyone makes the same pathetic promises just so they can put it on their transcripts to get into college. So vote for me, because I don't even want to go to college, and I don't care, and as president I won't do anything. The only promise I make is that if elected I will immediately dismantle the student government, so that none of us will ever have to sit through one of these stupid assemblies again!

There is a sudden huge cathartic eruption of cheers and applause. Tammy has set them free. Even cynical old Doug Schenken and his buddies join in.

STUDENTS Tammy! Tammy! Tammy!

In total control, she steps back from the mike and CURTSIES.

Walt shoots an angry, confused look at Jim, who shrugs. Tracy is clearly upset, but her smile remains eerily fixed. Paul just looks confused and ashamed. Jerry Slavin is convulsed in laughter and chants along with the multitude.

Tammy quickly grabs the mike for one final exhortation.

TAMMY Or don't vote for me! Who cares? Don't vote at all!

The students go nuts.

INT. CARVER PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE – DAY
Dr. Hendricks is in a serious post-assembly discussion with Jim and VICE PRINCIPAL RON BELL.

WALT That little bitch made a fool of us. I want her out of the election. Getting everybody all riled up like that. She's finished, you hear me? Washed up.

JIM Walt, we can't throw her out of the election just because we don't like her speech. That's not what student government's about.

WALT *(Grumbling)* Yeah . . . whatever. All I know is she's a troublemaker. She's on my list.

RON All we need to do is send a message, so maybe we should just suspend her.

WALT Right. That's it. She's suspended for a week!

To emphasize his point, Walt throws his STYROFOAM CUP at the wastepaper basket and misses. Lowell the janitor, passing by outside the door, notices the cup bouncing on the floor.

JIM I think that's a little strong, Walt.

WALT Ron?

RON We don't want to make a martyr out of her. Three days sounds right to me.

WALT Okay. Three days. Take care of it.

EXT. STREETS – DAY
Tammy rides her bike on this crisp sunny day. The music is buoyant. Tammy is all smiles.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* Being suspended is like getting a paid vacation. Too bad it was only three days!

EXT. 7-11 – DAY
Tammy is hanging out by the entrance. A DUDE emerges from the store carrying a 12-pack of beer. En route to his car, he throws Tammy a pack of CIGARETTES.

DUDE Here you go.

Tammy looks at the pack.

TAMMY Hey—I said lights!

EXT. IMMACULATE HEART ACADEMY – DAY
A cigarette hanging out of her mouth, Tammy rides by the front of this Catholic girls' school.

NOW AT THE ATHLETIC FIELD –

Tammy gets off her bike, goes to look through the surrounding fence at –

GIRLS PLAYING FIELD HOCKEY in their cleats, short skirts, jerseys. LITURGICAL MUSIC accompanies SLOW MOTION close-ups of the girls in action.

Tammy seems to breathe them in.

INT. METZLER – TAMMY'S BEDROOM – DAY
Wearing headphones, Tammy DANCES to music only she can hear. She happens to glance toward her door and notices a MANILA ENVELOPE sliding under it. She opens the door and finds a startled Paul.

TAMMY What do you want?

PAUL Oh. Hi, Tammy. I was just, you know, I went to all your teachers and got your assignments.

Tammy looks at him, picks up the packet.

PAUL I just thought, well, last time you got suspended you fell so behind and—

TAMMY Okay, Paul. Thanks. Thanks a lot.

Paul smiles at the acknowledgment of his good deed.

TAMMY Now could you leave me alone?

PAUL Yeah. Oh, one more thing, Tammy. You know, all this election stuff. 'Cause, you know, everyone is saying it's so weird that you're running against me, and, well, it is kind of weird, and you haven't really told me why you're doing it and didn't tell me in advance or anything. But that's okay, you know. I respect your privacy. I just want you to know that no matter who wins, if it's you or me, there's no hard feelings. We're still brother and sister. Okay? 'Cause . . . and I hope you feel the same.

TAMMY Sure, Paul. No hard feelings.

PAUL Okay. Great. I feel good.

Paul is about to leave again but—

PAUL Oh. Oh. Yeah. Right. One other thing. Since you know Lisa so well, could you give me some advice? I want to get her something for helping me with the election. You know, something really special—like flowers or candy or flowers and candy. Or is that too typical? I mean, can you think of something? Something really special? You know, something she'd really like?

Tammy looks as though she'd like to push the button on all the world's atomic bombs.

EXT. CARVER HIGH– DAY
CLOSE ON A GIANT OUTLINED "O" – drawn on white paper. A hand enters frame with a brush and begins to fill in the outline with blue tempera paint.

Camera RISES to reveal the "O" as part of a giant banner.

This spread pages **48-55** of original script

Tracy is working on some letters, while ERIC OVERHOLDT is working on others.

TRACY *(V.O.)* What happened at the speeches was an unconscionable travesty. That little bitch Tammy Metzler wanted to make a fool out of me. Well, it wasn't going to work. People do care who wins. Things do matter.

Finally, we're high enough to read:
WHO CARES? I DO! VOTE TRACY!

TRACY Eric, the "r" is supposed to be green, not blue.

ERIC Oh. Okay.

Eric carefully paints over his mistake, then works up some courage.

ERIC So, Tracy, I was wondering if after we finish with these you'd like to go to a movie or something.

TRACY That's okay. I'm too busy.

Ouch.

INT. CARVER YEARBOOK OFFICE – NIGHT
A haggard Tracy sits alone at a computer monitor.

TRACY *(V.O.)* People are so ungrateful. If all those students who cheered for Tammy Metzler only knew how hard I worked for Carver. Like all the late nights I spent at the yearbook office just to give them their memories.

THE MONITOR
displays a DIGITIZED PHOTO of the Carver yearbook staff. DAVE NOVOTNY peers proudly from behind two of the taller students. A CURSOR in the shape of tiny SCISSORS makes a small circle around Dave's face. Suddenly, the cursor turns into a tiny HAND and drags Dave's dislodged head into the TRASH.

Tracy concentrates as she deftly controls the mouse.

TRACY *(V.O.)* One of my duties was to clean up the group photos. It was a cinch with our new software.

THE COMPUTER MONITOR AGAIN –
as Tracy outlines a piece of the WALL and places it in the void where Dave used to be, blurring the edges for a perfect effect. *Voilà!*

Satisfied, Tracy taps on the keyboard.

TRACY *(Under her breath)* Let's see . . . "save" is Command "S." Okay.

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – NIGHT
Tracy is heading down the hall toward the exit when she rounds a corner and, suddenly deeply troubled, sees that –

HER NEW "WHO CARES?" BANNER has come loose on an upper corner and is drooping.

Tracy puts down her things and JUMPS up to slap the corner back into place. Satisfied, she turns away. But then – SHOOP! The banner fights back, peeling even further from the wall. Tracy prepares for battle.

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – NIGHT
Now standing on an overturned PLASTIC GARBAGE CAN, Tracy tries to smooth the banner. Suddenly the garbage can begins to buckle. Struggling to retain her balance, Tracy grabs the banner and as she TUMBLES yanks the whole thing down.

Overcome with anger and frustration, she thrashes around on the ground and TEARS UP what remains of her banner.

PAUL METZLER
smiles down at Tracy from his poster across the hall.

Tracy looks up at it. Instantly she is on her feet, lunging for the poster. She jumps up, TEARS it down, and RIPS Paul's head into pieces.

Blood issues from a thin paper cut on one hand. Tracy regards it at first without comprehending, then raises it to her mouth. While sucking her wound, her gaze falls on –

ANOTHER SMILING PAUL mocking her pain.

ANGLE FROM WAY DOWN THE HALL –
Hurricane Tracy begins a savage assault on the fragile coast of Carver High. Paul's campaign posters fill the air, shredded to pieces by the powerful winds of jealousy and rage.

TIME DISSOLVE – to Tracy even farther down the hall, still jumping, still ripping.

TRACK FROM OVERHEAD – THE HALLWAY FLOOR –
where a thousand bits of Paul lie scattered – a grinning mouth here, an eye there.

TILT UP finally to Tracy, sweating, panting. She finishes ripping a poster and looks to find another. But there are no more Paul posters: she has destroyed them all. Tracy raises her hands and sees they are streaked with blood.

INT. CARVER GIRLS' BATHROOM – NIGHT
Tracy is at the sink, washing away the blood. She pats her hands dry with paper towels. The gravity of what she's done now sinks in, and she panics.

TRACY I didn't do this. I didn't do it.

She lifts the top off a garbage can, removes the PLASTIC LINER.

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – NIGHT
With frantic haste, Tracy stuffs the evidence of her awful deed into the garbage bag.

EXT. CARVER BACK OF SCHOOL – NIGHT
Tracy's face is half-obscured by the bulging bag she carries down the sidewalk.

EXT. CARVER PARKING LOT – NIGHT
Tracy opens her TRUNK and heaves the garbage bag inside. Slamming the trunk, she looks around – no one.

INT. TRACY'S CAR – NIGHT
Tracy drives, sucking on a wounded hand. She glances frequently in the rearview mirror.

EXT. POWER PLANT STREET – NIGHT
Tracy's car drives down a REMOTE ROAD. There are no sidewalks here, and the surroundings consist of scrubby vegetation and industrial structures. In the background looms a POWER PLANT.

INT. TRACY'S CAR – CONTINUOUS
We now sense that Tracy has a plan. She throws the car into reverse, backs up and turns onto –

EXT. POWER PLANT ACCESS ROAD – CONTINUOUS
Tracy stops the car near an EMBANKMENT. She gets out and pulls the garbage bag from the trunk.

With a big shove, Tracy sends the bag cartwheeling down the hill. Breathing hard but clearly relieved, Tracy watches the evidence of her deed tumble into obscurity.

POWER PLANT ACCESS ROAD –
Tracy's shadowy figure runs back to the car.

EXT. HILL ABOVE POWER PLANT – NIGHT
Tammy momentarily drops her BINOCULARS before raising them again.

THROUGH THE BINOCULARS –
Tracy's car speeds away.

Tammy drops her binoculars and mounts her bike.

EXT. EMBANKMENT – NIGHT
Tammy skids to a stop, drops her bike, and heads down the embankment.

CLOSE ON THE HEFTY BAG as Tammy draws near. She pauses at first, but intrepid curiosity conquers her fear. She unties the knot.

FROM INSIDE THE BAG we see Tammy's sudden look of HORROR.

PAUL'S MANGLED FACE
smiles up at her. Tammy raises it toward camera.

INT. NOVOTNY BATHROOM – MORNING
CLOSE ON A DRAIN as a hand extracts a huge WAD OF HAIR – stringy, mucousy, fetid.

Jim holds it up for Linda, who stands behind him in her bathrobe.

JIM There's your culprit.

He examines it from different angles. Both scrunch their faces.

JIM Shall we give it a name?

LINDA *(Not missing a beat)* Dave.

CLOSE ON AN OPEN TOILET – Plop! The hairwad joins several smaller stringy friends.

NOW AT THE SINK
Jim washes his hands. Linda glances between Jim and the water running in the shower. It's getting steamy.

LINDA Did you know Dave's a bed wetter?

JIM No, I . . . uh, didn't know that.

LINDA All his life. He's tried everything.

JIM *(About the shower)* Still clear?

LINDA Yep.

JIM We'll let it run awhile.

Jim turns off the faucet and reaches for a towel. Linda offers him another.

LINDA This one's clean.

Jim takes it and dries his hands. Linda now stands very close to him. Jim sets the towel on the sink. It's a little awkward as they look into each other's eyes, standing so near.

LINDA I guess you'd better get to work, huh? You're going to be late.

She slowly wraps her arms around Jim's neck and pulls him to her, a hug of gratitude and warmth—nothing sexual here, just the embrace of two people in need of shelter from the storm of life. No, nothing sexual at all.

LINDA Thank you, Jim.

Now Linda begins to cry a little, and things begin to change—hands wander, cheek brushes cheek. Finally lips meet, tenderly at first. Maintenant le deluge.

INT. NOVOTNY LIVING ROOM – DAY
Jim and Linda stumble in from the hallway locked in an embrace. They rove around the room, barely able to keep their balance. Finally, they fall to the ground.

CLOSE ON LITTLE DARRYL – playing with his foot in the CRIB. Through the bars behind him we can discern the murky shape of Linda and Jim rutting and grunting like wild boars.

EXT. NOVOTNY DRIVEWAY – DAY
Jim starts his car. Linda leans into his window. She looks around the neighborhood before kissing him firmly on the mouth.

LINDA Hey.

JIM Yeah?

LINDA Take me to that motel. Like you wanted.

JIM Right now?

LINDA Easy, tiger. Come by after school. I'll leave Darryl with the sitter.

JIM Three twenty-five.

LINDA Three twenty-five.

EXT. HILLSIDE ROAD – DAY
VROOM! Jim roars past us in his new RED FERRARI CONVERTIBLE.

EXT. ITALIAN RIVIERA (REAR PROJECTION) – CONTINUOUS
Jim wears a BLACK SUIT and hip WRAPAROUND SUNGLASSES as he drives. He lights a cigarette. Behind him is a cheesy, dated REAR PROJECTION of a curvy MOUNTAIN ROAD. Next stop: Portofino!

JIM *(V.O.)* What had blossomed between Linda and me was too real, too powerful to deny. For the first time in years, I felt free and alive!

EXT. CARVER PARKING LOT – DAY
Jim's Ferrari heads up the driveway and into his assigned space. He opens the Ferrari door.

JIM'S FOOT touches the pavement – not a shiny Salvatore Ferragamo loafer but a worn-out Dexter.

WIDE – Jim is back in his own clothes, and his car has reverted to a Ford Escort in need of a wash. He heads toward the school.

INT. CARVER LIBRARY – DAY
Jim enters the library, walks among the stacks.

JIM *(V.O.)* So as you can imagine, my thoughts weren't on the election that Monday morning.

Jim takes a BOOK from the shelf.

JIM *(V.O.)* My thoughts were only on Linda, on how perfect she felt inside. There was a special poem I wanted to read to her later, at the motel, as she lay next to me.

Jim flips through the book and finds the poem he seeks. His lips move silently.

JIM'S VOICE *(V.O.)* Close, close the lovers keep. They stay together in their sleep. Close as two pages in a book. That read each other in the dark . . .

Suddenly–a grating VOICE from the loudspeakers.

VOICE *(V.O.)* Mr. McAllister to the principal's office. Mr. McAllister to the principal's office.

Jim smacks the book closed.

INT. CARVER PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE – DAY
LISA FLANAGAN –
her face streaked with tears from outrage and confusion.

LISA It's not fair. It's not fair.

Paul sits next to Lisa on the vinyl sofa. He wants to console her, but he doesn't know how.

PAUL I just don't think anybody would do something like that on purpose. It must have been some kind of mistake. Like a maintenance thing.

Jim enters.

WALT Jim, where the hell have you been?

JIM Nowhere. I don't have class until second period.

WALT Even tried you at home. We've got a situation here.

LISA If Paul loses tomorrow, it's not fair. There has to be another election. With posters.

JIM What's the problem?

LISA Didn't you see?

WALT Somebody tore down their posters.

LISA Those posters cost a lot of money we don't have! There's no time to make any more posters, there's no—

WALT We'll get to the bottom of it.

PAUL *(To Lisa)* We still have some extra ones, don't we? Maybe we can just—

LISA It was Tammy! That's who it was.

PAUL Oh, no, hey. Like I said, Tammy wouldn't . . . she . . .

WALT Well, that speech she gave—it was pretty, you know, pretty out there. But we'll get to the bottom of it. Don't you

worry. Mr. McAllister is going to see to that. Right, Jim?

JIM *(His thoughts elsewhere)* Oh yeah, you bet.

LISA She should be expelled. Or worse!

WALT You two just go back and focus on your studies. Mr. McAllister's going to handle this.

INT. CARVER CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM – DAY
A BUNSEN BURNER – as a VIAL containing blue liquid is held to the flame. The solution magically changes from blue to yellow.

Wearing goggles, Tracy holds the beaker with chemist's tongs. Her two LAB PARTNERS observe.

The classroom door and a STUDENT approaches the teacher, MR. BECKMAN, to deliver a note.

MR. BECKMAN Tracy?

Tracy looks up through her goggles.

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – DAY
LONG TRACKING SHOT of Tracy as she leaves the classroom. As she walks through the desolate halls and descends a flight of stairs, she holds her head high, suggesting a serene, almost regal confidence.

TRACY *(V.O.)* When I arrived at school that morning, I was shocked to find that one of my key banners had been removed by vandals. I noticed that a few of my rival's posters had also been tampered with. Of course, I was outraged, but one day before the election is not the time to lose your head over a couple of posters. When you're in the public eye, attacks like that just come with the territory.

Finally she reaches the—

INT. CARVER HIGH FACULTY LOUNGE – DAY
Jim is inside.

JIM Tracy. Come on in. And shut the door behind you.

She goes in and closes the door in our face.

INT. CARVER HIGH FACULTY LOUNGE – DAY
Tracy is seated in a chair. Jim hovers above her, alternately leaning on a desk and pacing.

JIM I guess you know why you're here.

TRACY If it's about the posters, I think it's so awful. It's a travesty.

JIM A travesty. Huh. That's interesting, because I think you did it.

TRACY Wait—are you accusing me? You're not serious. *(Indignant)* I can't . . . Mr. McAllister, we have worked together on SGA for three solid years and . . . I mean, I can't believe it. I'm . . . I'm shocked!

Jim stares at her.

TRACY Mr. M., I am running on my qualifications. I would never need to resort to, you know, to vandalism like a, you know . . . Plus, my own best banner was torn down. Did I do that too?

JIM Were you or were you not working in the Watchdog office over the weekend?

TRACY I was. So? Mr. Pecharda let me in. As you know, with all my responsibilities I often come in on the weekend and have permission to do so. But I left very early, around 6:30.

JIM 6:30. How do you know what time the posters were torn down?

TRACY I don't. I just know they were there when I left. I'm giving you helpful information is all. You know, instead of wasting time interrogating me, we should be out there trying to find out who did this.

JIM Okay, Tracy, so who do you think did it? Whom should we "interrogate?"

TRACY Well, I don't know. It could have been anybody. There are a lot of, you know, subversive elements around Carver. You know, like Rick Thieson and Kevin Speck and those burnouts. Or Doug Schenken—what about him? Or what about Tammy Metzler? Her whole thing is being anti-this and anti-that.

Jim shifts gears.

JIM You're a very intelligent girl, Tracy. You have many admirable qualities. But someday maybe you'll learn that being smart and always being on top and doing whatever you need to do to get ahead, and yes, stepping on people to get there, well, there's a lot more to life than that. And in the end, you're only cheating yourself.

TRACY Why are you lecturing me?

JIM This isn't the time or the place to get into it, but there is, for just one example, a certain former colleague of mine, who made a very big mistake, a life mistake. I think the lesson there is that, old and young, we all make mistakes, and we have to learn that our actions, all of them, can carry serious consequences. You're very young, Tracy—underage, in fact—but maybe one day you'll understand.

TRACY I don't know what you're referring to, but I do know that if certain older and wiser people hadn't acted like such little babies and gotten all mushy, everything would be okay.

JIM I agree. But I also think certain young and naive people need to thank their lucky stars and be very, very grateful the whole school didn't find out about certain indiscretions which could have ruined their reputations and chances to win certain elections.

TRACY And I think certain older persons like you and your

"colleague" shouldn't be leching after their students, especially when some of them can't even get their own wives pregnant. And they certainly shouldn't be running around making slanderous accusations. Especially when certain young, naive people's mothers are paralegal secretaries at the city's biggest law firm and have won many successful lawsuits. And if you want to keep questioning me like this, I won't continue without my attorney present.

Jim realizes the mountain he's trying to climb is just too slippery.

JIM Okay, Tracy. Have it your way.

There's a KNOCK. Jim and Tracy turn to see—

Tammy Metzler, timidly poking her head in.

TAMMY You wanted to see me, Mr. M.?

JIM Just wait outside, Tammy.

TAMMY Okay. But is this about the posters?

JIM Possibly. Please just wait outside.

TAMMY Okay. *(Looking at Tracy)* Because I know who did it. So . . . I'll just be outside.

Tammy manages to squeeze in a naughty little smile before closing the door.

INT. CARVER HIGH FACULTY LOUNGE – DAY
Tammy sits patiently in a chair, bobbing to an unheard song. The door opens, and Tracy emerges.

JIM Tracy, don't go away. Come in, Tammy.

As Tammy and Tracy cross, Tracy speaks in a low voice but loud enough for Jim to hear.

TRACY This ought to be good.

INT. CARVER HIGH FACULTY LOUNGE – DAY
Tammy sits facing Jim, cradling her backpack.

JIM So . . . what do you have to tell me?

TAMMY Well, this is hard for me, but I think it's important to be honest. Don't you?

JIM *(Impatient)* What is it, Tammy?

TAMMY I'm the one. I did it. I tore down Paul's posters.

Jim looks at her skeptically, doesn't say a word.

TAMMY I did it.

JIM And when did you do it?

TAMMY This weekend.

JIM Exactly when?

TAMMY I don't know. Yesterday. Sunday.

JIM And how did you get in the school?

TAMMY Door was open.

JIM Which door?

TAMMY I don't know. All I know is I did it!

JIM I don't believe you.

TAMMY I have proof.

She burrows in her backpack.

INT. CARVER HIGH FACULTY LOUNGE – CONTINUOUS
Tracy stands up from her seat and manages to PEEK THROUGH THE WINDOW of the conference room. She sees –

TAMMY
pulling out a handful of POSTER SHREDS from her backpack and handing them to Jim.

Tracy turns away and covers her mouth with one hand.

INT. CARVER HIGH FACULTY LOUNGE – CONTINUOUS
THE POSTER FRAGMENTS
in Jim's hands. TILT UP to Tammy really hamming it up.

TAMMY You don't know what it's like to grow up in the shadow of an older brother like Paul. It's always Paul, Paul, Paul, Paul. Never Tammy. I'm only "Paul's little sister. You must be Paul's little sister." He's so perfect, and I'm so troubled. I hate him! I hate him! And I tore down his posters. It was a horrible, cowardly act, but I did it . . . I did it . . . I did it . . . And I'm not sorry . . .

Jim watches her performance until he can't take it anymore: he's got other fish to fry.

JIM Fine! I don't know what your problem is, but if that's the way you want it, that's the way it'll be. I don't have time. You're out of the election, and I'm turning you over to Dr. Hendricks.

He throws the door open.

JIM Tracy?

INT. CARVER HIGH FACULTY LOUNGE – CONTINUOUS
Tracy is frightened but still plays the indignant victim.

TRACY Yes?

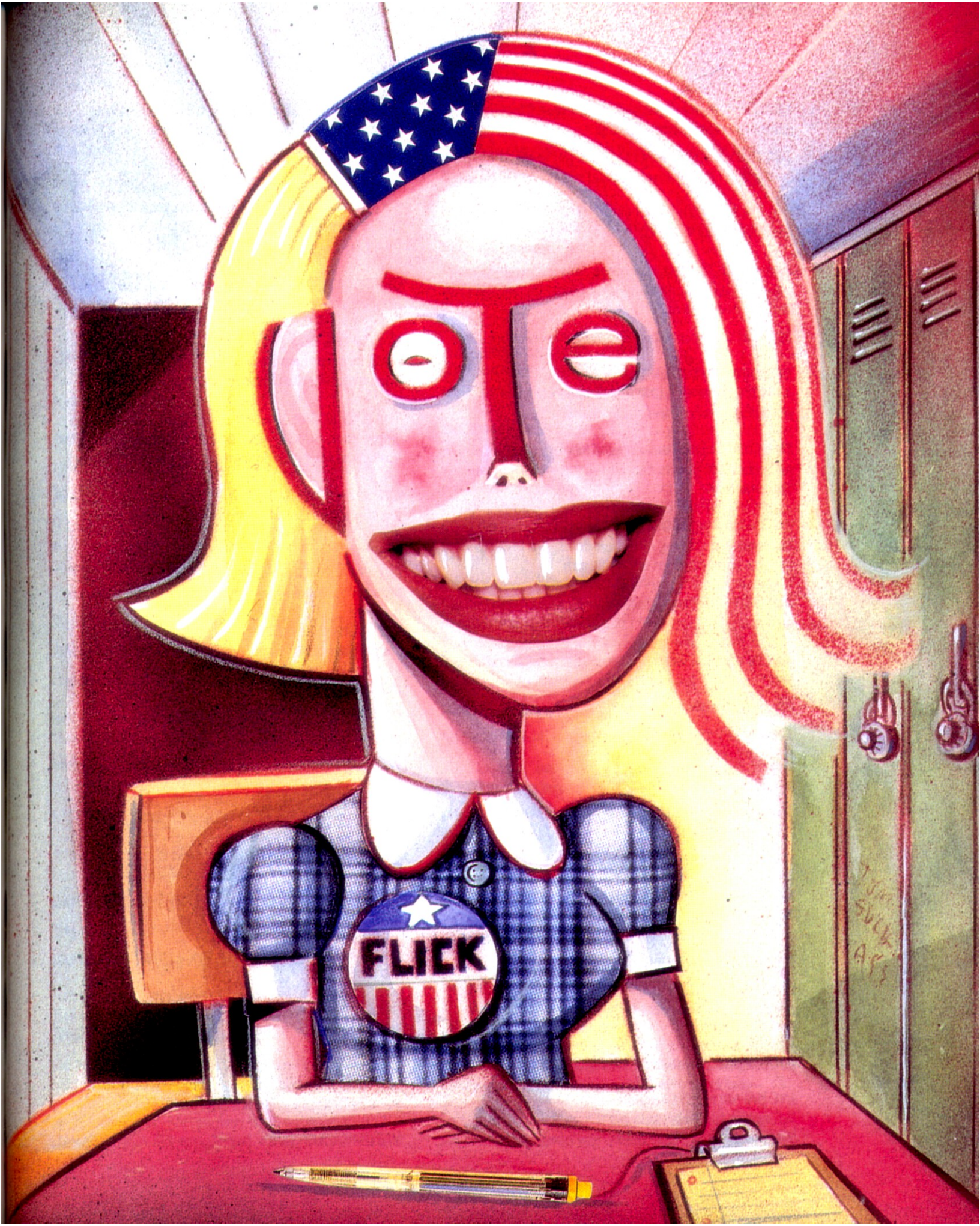
JIM Looks like today's your lucky day.

What does he mean?

TRACY What do you mean?

JIM You're off the hook. Tammy here has "confessed."

It takes Tracy a second to figure out how to react. But once she's got it, she runs with it.


ote
FLICK

TRACY I told you. I told you! *(Pointing at Tammy)* You're going to pay for my banner!

JIM That's enough, Tracy. Quit while you're ahead, okay? I'll handle this. *(To Miss Beeder)* Could you ask Walt to come in?

INT. JIM'S TEACHER'S OFFICE – DAY
Jim is feverishly TYPING.

JIM *(V.O.)* The rest of the day was unbearable. I kept smelling Linda on my clothes and on my fingers and I just couldn't wait to get out of there.

He yanks the paper out of the carriage and hurries away.

INT. CARVER XEROX ROOM – DAY
A PHOTOCOPY COLLATOR in operation.
Jim pulls sheets out and stacks them.

JIM *(V.O.)* I wanted everything to be perfect that afternoon, so I decided to give myself a little time to prepare during eighth period.

INT. CARVER – JIM'S CLASSROOM – DAY
Students are settling into their seats. Jim breezes in, a sheaf of papers tucked under his arm.

JIM Pop quiz, everybody.

The class groans.

JIM No whining. If you've done your reading, this is an easy one.

Jim peels off a stack of papers for each row.

JIM *(V.O.)* I'd have exactly forty-eight minutes to make all the arrangements.

Jim glances at the clock: 2:08.

JIM If you finish early, just sit quietly and check your work. I'll be right back.

POOF—he's gone!

EXT. CARVER FRONT STEPS – DAY
TRACK WITH JIM
as he SPRINTS toward the parking lot, fumbling for his keys.

EXT. WALGREEN'S – DAY
Jim exits with a bouquet of flowers and a plastic bag.

EXT. SAFARI MOTEL FRONT – DAY
Jim's car speeds into the driveway and parks.

INT. SAFARI MOTEL FRONT – DAY
Jim opens the door, sets his things down, and gets to work.

THE SINK –
Jim dumps a bucketful of ICE and wedges in a bottle of cheap CHAMPAGNE.

THE BEDSIDE TABLE –
Jim props up his flowers in the ice bucket and puts a small box of Russell Stover's CANDY next to it. He unwraps the motel's plastic cups and places them just so. Perfect.

JIM'S BOOK OF POETRY – open to that special poem. He marks it with a carnation.

UNDER THE BED –
Jim's face appears as he kneels down and slides the book into place, ready for that perfect moment.

THE BATHROOM –
where Jim is NAKED now, squatting in the bathtub, frantically washing his undercarriage. He checks his watch.

EXT. SAFARI MOTEL ROOM – DAY
Jim shuts the door and with jaunty confidence slips the key into his pocket.

EXT. SAFARI MOTEL – DAY
Jim's car speeds toward the street.

EXT. CARVER PARKING LOT – DAY
Jim gets out of his car and races back toward the school.

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – DAY
Jim skids around a corner.

INT. JIM'S CLASSROOM – DAY
With feigned coolness, he saunters into class just as the BELL RINGS.

JIM Okay, everybody, pass them forward. Stephanie, put down your pen.

The class begins to rise.

JIM I'll see you all on Wednesday. And don't forget to vote tomorrow.

FROM BEHIND – Jim's back has a large vulva-shaped patch of SWEAT.

EXT. CARVER PARKING LOT – DAY
Jim hurries back to his car, weaving his way through students.

EXT. NOVOTNY DRIVEWAY – DAY
Jim pulls to a stop in Linda's driveway.

INT. JIM'S CAR – DAY

Jim checks his watch: 3:24 turns into 3:25.

JIM Bingo.

EXT. NOVOTNY DRIVEWAY – DAY
JIM'S FINGER on the doorbell. DING-DONG.

Jim waits, rings again. No answer. He knocks. No one. He tries the door. Locked. Maybe she's out back. He walks around the house to –

EXT. NOVOTNY BACKYARD – CONTINUOUS
It's a lovely little backyard. Springtime flowers bloom. Bees buzz among the peonies.

Jim opens the gate, approaches the back door, and knocks.

JIM Linda!

He rears back and aims his yell toward the second floor.

JIM Linda! It's Jim!

No response. He tries the door. It's locked. Jim cranes his neck for a last look at the house. As he starts to leave, he calls out one final time, not really expecting a response.

JIM Linda!

Suddenly A WASP STINGS him above his right EYE.

JIM Oww! Fuck! Jesus fuck!

Cursing and holding his head, Jim stumbles out the gate.

INT. SAFARI MOTEL LOBBY – DAY
Through the glass windows, we see Jim's car pull into the lot and park. Jim enters the lobby.

His eye is puffy and red.

LANCE, the motel clerk, watches TV behind the counter.

JIM By any chance, has a woman shown up in the last half-hour or so? Maybe she was looking for me.

LANCE Nobody's come in here looking for anybody. Just you.

JIM Are you sure?

LANCE What's wrong with your eye?

INT. SAFARI MOTEL ROOM – DAY
THE TELEPHONE –
as Jim punches in Linda's number.

Jim holds the phone against his ear and the champagne bottle against his eye.

JIM Linda, it's me. Are you there? Pick up. Okay, it's 4:32. I came by at 3:25 like we said and waited, but you weren't there. Anyway, I hope you're okay—I'm worried about you. So now I'm just at the . . . at the place we talked about. Suite 219. So I'm here. Everything's all set. You can just come over. Can't wait. Okay. Bye.

EXT. SAFARI MOTEL – DAY
TIME LAPSE – as the sky darkens, the motel's NEON SIGN turns on.

Jim now descends the motel stairway carrying his Walgreen's sack. He puts the key into the drop box and gets in his car.

INT. METZLER KITCHEN – NIGHT
DICK METZLER and his wife, JO, are at the breakfast table. Tammy sits across from them, her eyes lowered.

DICK METZLER I don't get it. What you have against your mother and me, against your brother Paul, is completely beyond me. And your mother is extremely upset, she's at the end of her rope. Your behavior gets crazier and crazier and wilder and wilder, and who knows what the hell else you're doing out there that we don't even know about?

TAMMY Dad, I—

DICK *(Jabbing his finger)* Don't you smartass me! Don't you dare smartass me! You just shut your mouth! *(Taking a breath)* Now your mother and I have had a long talk with Walt Hendricks—we just got off the phone with him at home. You know, he doesn't want you back at Carver. He's fed up with you. Fed up! And I don't blame him!

JO Dick . . . Dick . . .

DICK What?

JO *(Calmly)* Tammy, now we've come to a decision. We just think it would be best—

DICK You're going to Catholic school next year! You're going to Sacred Heart! Maybe they'll straighten you out!

ANGLE FROM UNDER THE TABLE – Her head low, Tammy SMILES to herself.

EXT. MCALLISTER – FRONT – NIGHT
Jim's car pulls into the driveway.

INT. MCALLISTER KITCHEN – NIGHT
Jim enters the back door and sets his satchel down in the usual place. He opens the refrigerator, grabs a beer. As he closes the door, something catches his eye. He reaches inside and throws a plastic container away. Rooting around noisily, he finds other things to dispose of. Suddenly –

A BABY CRY stops him cold.

Jim stiffens, his good eye widening as the horrible truth

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sinks in. He carefully closes the refrigerator and tiptoes toward the living room.

INT. MCALLISTER LIVING ROOM – CONTINUOUS
Jim's face slowly appears around the corner, bad eye first. Finally, he's able to see –

LINDA AND DIANE together on the living room sofa, staring at him. Their eyes are red from crying. Little Darryl squirms in Linda's lap.

Caught, Jim emerges from his hiding place. No one speaks. Finally, he looks down, sucks in air, blows it out again, nods a little.

JIM *(Very softly)* Okay.

He turns to leave, and nobody stops him.

EXT. JIM'S HOME – NIGHT
Jim wanders out the front door and stands in his driveway, bewildered and alone. The camera slowly CRANES UP, eventually looking down on him from a great height.

JIM *(V.O.)* As I walked out of my home that evening, unsure if I'd ever return, my entire life in question, I somehow discovered within myself a place of perfect peace. Oddly, in my solitude I felt more than ever a sense of communion with every human being—past, present and future. Because no matter what we tell ourselves, no matter what illusions of friendship and family we create, each of us is always and forever profoundly alone.

INT. TRACY'S BEDROOM – NIGHT
FROM OVERHEAD – Tracy slides out of her bed and kneels beside it.

TRACY Dear Lord Jesus, I do not often speak with You and ask for things, but now I really must insist that You help me win the election tomorrow, because I deserve it and Paul Metzler doesn't, as You well know. I realize that it was Your divine hand that disqualified Tammy, and now I'm asking that You go that one last mile and make sure to put me in office where I belong, so that I may carry out Your will on Earth as it is in Heaven. If elected, I promise that I will pray more often. Okay? Amen.

INT. TAMMY'S BEDROOM – NIGHT
FROM OVERHEAD – Tammy wears a white T-shirt and underwear and kneels at her bedside.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* Dear God, I know I don't believe in you, but since I'll be starting Catholic school soon, I thought I should practice. Let's see . . . what do I want? I want people to be nicer to each other. I want Lisa to realize what a bitch she has been and feel really bad and apologize for how she hurt me and know how much I still love her. In spite of everything, I still want Paul to win the election tomorrow, not that robot Tracy. I also want a really expensive pair of leather pants . . . and someday I want to be really good friends with Madonna. Love, Tammy.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM
FROM OVERHEAD – Paul lies in bed looking at the heavens beyond his ceiling.

PAUL *(V.O.)* Dear God, thank You for all Your blessings. You have given me so many things, like good health, nice parents, a nice truck, and what I've been told is a large penis, and I'm very grateful. But I sure am worried about Tammy. In my heart I still can't believe she tore down my posters, but sometimes she does get so weird and angry. Please help her be a happier person, because she's so smart and sensitive, and I love her. Also, I'm nervous about the election tomorrow, and I guess I want to win and all, but I know that's totally up to You. You'll decide who the best person is, and I'll accept it. And forgive my sins, whatever they may be. Amen.

FADE OUT

INT. JIM'S CAR – NIGHT
Jim sits parked outside of Linda's house, a SLURPEE held against his now grotesquely swollen eye. He is so tired and pain-ridden that he practically gasps for breath.

JIM *(V.O.)* Linda never came home that night. I know, because I spent the entire night in her driveway.

INT. TRACY'S KITCHEN – DAWN
Tracy and her mom are hard at work frosting cupcakes.

TRACY *(V.O.)* Mom and I got up at 5 A.M., and together we custom-iced three hundred and fifty cupcakes.

CLOSE ON A CUPCAKE – as "PICK FLICK" is written on it with a yellow icing tube.

Mrs. Flick cheerfully performs her task. She hums.

TRACY *(V.O.)* I remember she was so happy, like there was nothing in the world she'd rather be doing. Besides me and her job, I guess my mom doesn't have much of a life. She hasn't dated anyone since Frank, and she hardly ever buys new clothes for herself or travels.

TRACY Mom?

MRS. FLICK Hmmm?

TRACY I think I'm going to lose today.

MRS. FLICK What are you talking about? This time tomorrow, you'll be president.

TRACY You really think so?

Mrs. Flick puts an arm around her daughter.

MRS. FLICK Tracy Flick's a winner.

Tracy wants to show she's encouraged, but her weak smile reveals that she's unconvinced.

EXT. NOVOTNY HOUSE – DAWN
Jim's car has not moved from its spot on the driveway. Its windows are now fogged. A LOUD GARBAGE TRUCK rumbles by.

INT. JIM'S CAR – CONTINUOUS
Reclined in his car seat, mouth open as he sleeps, Jim is awakened by the truck. His breath steams. His eye has turned bluish. He tries to wipe the condensation from the windshield, but it's on the outside.

EXT. NOVOTNY DRIVEWAY – CONTINUOUS
Jim opens the door and looks around – no sign of Linda's car. He stiffly walks to the side of the garage and unzips his pants to pee.

Now cradling his head on the roof of his car, Jim gathers what little strength he has, gets in, and tries to start the cold engine.

JIM *(V.O.)* I had no choice but to go home. I needed to shower, get fresh clothes, explain what I could to Diane. But what was I going to say? That our marriage had become a charade? That making love with Linda had given me a vision of a better life?

THE TAILPIPE
finally coughs out a cloud of exhaust.

INT./EXT. JIM'S CAR – DAWN
Jim drives, bleary-eyed. He creeps along his tree-lined middle-class block.

JIM *(V.O.)* Then again, maybe I could slip in and out without waking her up.

Jim slows to a stop, looks with dread at his home.

EXT. MCALLISTER – FRONT – CONTINUOUS
On the front porch sits A GYM BAG. Jim approaches, stares numbly at the bag. Drawing a long breath, he bends over and picks it up. Attached is a NOTE reading: "Don't come in."

EXT. CARVER HIGH – DAWN
At the foot of the main walk to the school, Tracy and her mother are setting up a CARD TABLE covered with little pink cakes.

Jim's Ford Escort chugs its way through the fog and comes to a stop. Looking like a war refugee, Jim emerges from his car carrying the gym bag and heads toward school.

TRACY *(Chirping)* Good morning, Mr. M.

Jim stops, turns slowly, regards mother and daughter with a crazed, one-eyed, uncomprehending stare.

TRACY *(Holding one out)* Looks like you could use a cupcake!

Jim takes it wordlessly. As he heads up the walkway, he eats it in two huge bites, like a feral animal.

TRACY *(Calling out)* What's wrong with your eye? Are you Okay?

INT. CARVER BOYS' LOCKER ROOM – DAY
IN THE SHOWERS Jim scrubs himself as if to wash his whole life away.

JIM *(V.O.)* Cupcakes. Jesus Christ. Cupcakes? My life was crumbling, and I was expected to care about these ungrateful kids and their pathetic little dreams. As if my only purpose in life were to serve them.

JIM *(Mocking)* Mr. McAllister. Mr. McAllister. Somebody tore down my posters. It's not fair. It's not fair. Can I have an A? Can I have a recommendation? Can I? Can I?

AT THE MIRROR Jim adjusts his tie, tries to smooth his wrinkled shirt.

JIM *(V.O.)* Well, fuck them. Didn't I have my own life? Didn't I have my own dreams?

He coughs up phlegm and spits it into the sink.

JIM *(V.O.)* Cupcakes.

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – DAY
Jim exits the BOYS' LOCKER ROOM door and bumps into Mr. Beckman.

MR. BECKMAN Hey, Jim. Big day today.

JIM *(Putting on a smile)* Oh, yeah. Big day.

INT. CARVER HIGH OFFICE – DAY
MISS BEEDER of the school office is at the P.A. MICROPHONE. Walt is behind her. She looks over her shoulder, and Walt gives her the go-ahead.

MISS BEEDER Attention, everyone. We have an important announcement from our principal, Dr. Hendricks.

Walt gives Miss Beeder a courtesy smile and takes the mike.

WALT *(O.S.)* Good morning, students. It, uh, behooves me to inform you of an important change in today's elections. Effective this morning . . .

INT. CARVER (JIM'S) TEACHERS' OFFICE – DAY

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BALLOT AFTER BALLOT – as a black Magic Marker crosses out Tammy's name.

Jim sits at his desk and carries out his absurd task. He stops and stares. His thoughts wander far, far away.

WALT *(O.S.)* . . . sophomore Tammy Meltzer has been . . . Metzler has been determined ineligible—I repeat: ineligible—for SGA president. You may not vote for Tammy Metzler. All other candidates are eligible. Now please pay attention to a very important, uh, audio-visual presentation. *(Irritated, thinking he's off)* Pat, who typed this thing? I said I need all caps. . . .

INT. TV AND CARVER CLASSROOMS – DAY
CLOSE ON A TV – mounted in the corner. An educational video is just beginning. Host CLARK NAYLOR sits on the edge of a desk in a generic office set.

During the video, we cut to CLASSROOMS, where from the televisions' point of view, we see the students watching: English class, shop class, gym class, biology class.

CLARK *(On TV)* Hello, students. I'm Clark Naylor of Johnston's Educational Resources. It's election day, and how you vote will make a big difference in the activities, events, and perhaps even the policies of your school. Over the past few days or weeks, you've heard candidates for the various offices make their speeches and tell you where they stand. You've probably seen their posters. Maybe you've even had a chance to speak with them personally.

CLOSE-UPS OF STUDENTS now replace the wider shots of classrooms. Photographed as though from a Soviet propaganda film, some students look up nobly and attentively, while others watch with dead eyes and open mouth, and still others goof off.

CLARK *(On TV)* Well, today marks the end of campaigning, and now the spotlight turns to you. Voting is your privilege and your responsibility. Remember, no one needs to know for whom you've voted. That's between you . . . and you.

An AFRICAN-AMERICAN TEENAGER walks up to Clark.

CLARK *(On TV)* Now I'd like to introduce you to Tony. Tony's going to show you how to cast your vote. Are you ready, Tony?

TONY *(On TV)* I think so.

CLARK *(On TV)* Good. Let's get started.

INT. CARVER HIGH FACULTY LOUNGE – DAY
Jim ducks furtively into the lounge. He picks up a phone and dials. We hear the echo of the video emanating from all the classrooms.

LINDA'S VOICE *(V.O.)* Hi. You've reached the Novotnys. We're not around, but we'll call you back real soon. Have a nice day.

JIM Are you there? Linda, are you there? It's Jim. *(Suddenly angry)* Why did you do that? I trusted you. Completely. You've ruined my life. Do you know that? Do you realize that? Huh? Do you? You've ruined Diane's life. You ruined my life. Is that what you wanted? *(Recovering)* I'm sorry. It's just . . . I'm going nuts here. Okay, all right, so . . . Really, I'm sorry. I just think we should talk, okay? I love you.

INT. CARVER (JIM'S) TEACHERS' OFFICE – DAY
Jim crosses out more ballots, this time with perverse intensity.

JIM *(V.O.)* If only my own life could be corrected so easily, with nice fat black lines drawn neatly through my sins.

CLOSE ON TAMMY'S NAME – as it is blackened. We WIPE with the motion of the Magic Marker to:

INT. LITTLE SALLY UNIFORMS – DAY
SWISH! The curtain of the dressing room is drawn back, and there's Tammy. She beams and walks toward –

A THREE-PANEL MIRROR, where she takes herself in, dressed in her new Catholic schoolgirl UNIFORM.

The SALESLADY converses nearby with Jo Metzler.

SALESLADY And Sacred Heart is such a good school. Excellent school. The public schools are going downhill, as far as I'm concerned.

JO Well, we've had good luck at Carver, but for this one it's time for a change.

Tammy spins and admires the flip of the skirt.

SALESLADY So what do you think? Sacred Heart has the prettiest. They have that nice hint of purple.

TAMMY *(Lying)* I hate it.

JO You're just going to have to get used to it.

TAMMY Please, mom. Please don't make me go to Sacred Heart. I beg you.

JO *(To saleslady)* We'll take two.

INT. CARVER CAFETERIA – DAY
Makeshift POLLING BOOTHS are set up just outside the cafeteria. Behind two tables sit TWO TEACHERS who cross out voters' names on big master computer lists. Tracy stands in line, not-so-patiently waiting her turn.

TRACY *(V.O.)* When the time came to cast our votes, I stood in line just like everyone else.

She finally reaches the front of the line.

TEACHER Hi, Tracy.

TRACY Tracy Enid Flick.

TEACHER I know.

Tracy goes into a VOTING BOOTH and quickly marks her ballot. Sophomore PHIL CHOY stands nearby with his CAMERA.

TRACY Phil, you ready?

PHIL Ready.

Tracy exits the booth and heads toward the BALLOT BOX. She inserts her ballot halfway and freezes, smiling. Phil snaps a picture, but—

PHIL Just a second. My flash.

Tracy remains perfectly still while Phil fiddles with his camera. A STUDENT stands behind her, waiting to put his ballot in the box.

STUDENT Come on, Tracy.

TRACY *(Through her smile)* Just wait.

FLASH! Phil gets his shot and Tracy drops her ballot in.

TRACY Thanks, Phil.

On her way out, Tracy passes Paul at the end of the line. He gives her an enthusiastic THUMBS UP.

PAUL Way to go, Tracy! Isn't this exciting?

TRACY *(Awkward)* Yeah.

PAUL Well, good luck!

TRACY Okay. *(Reluctant)* Good luck to you too, Paul.

PAUL Thanks!

INT. CARVER – VOTING BOOTH IN CAFETERIA – DAY
Paul scans his ballot, struggles with his decision.

PAUL *(V.O.)* It's so weird. Do people always just vote for themselves? 'Cause looking at my own name on the ballot, I just . . . I don't know, I just felt like it's not right to vote for yourself.

THE BALLOT –
as Paul's pen puts an "X" next to the name "Tracy Flick."

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – DAY
THE BALLOT BOX is being carried through the halls by LARRY FOUCH and two other STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBERS. The music suggests the weighty importance of its contents and the sacred mission of its bearers.

INT. CARVER – JIM'S CLASSROOM – DAY
Jim is hunkered over his desk. He's a wreck: dark, dark circles under his eyes; his hair didn't dry right – frizzy here, matted there. And he's near tears.

Larry Fouch and his retinue enter cheerfully.

This spread pages **83-90** of original script

LARRY Okay, Mr. M.

Larry drops the ballot box on Jim's desk.

JIM What? Right. So let's start counting.

LARRY Well, I thought that . . . well, the way it always works is that Election Chairman does a count, then the SGA advisor, you know, for the two independent counts.

JIM Fine. So do your count. Start with president, and I'll be right back.

LARRY You have the key, Mr. McAllister.

Jim doesn't understand at first, the—

JIM Right. I know.

Jim proceeds to sort through his cluttered desk drawers but can't seem to find the key. The council members exchange concerned looks as Jim's search becomes frenzied.

LARRY Are you okay, Mr. M.?

ANOTHER STUDENT What happened to your eye?

JIM I'm fine. It's just a bee sting, a simple little everyday bee sting. Some people, they get stung, it's no big deal. Me, I swell up. Okay?

Jim emerges from the drawer wielding a VISE GRIP. He goes to the box and TEARS the entire hardware assembly off. Holding the mangled lock, he turns to the students, who look back STUNNED.

JIM I just want to get this over with, so we can have the assembly and go home. We don't have much time until eighth period. I have other things going on, too, you know.

LARRY Okay. Yeah. We know.

JIM All right. I'll be back.

INT. CARVER HIGH MEN'S BATHROOM – DAY
Jim slinks up to a PAY PHONE, inserts a coin, dials.

LINDA'S VOICE *(Cheery)* Hi. You've reached the Novotnys. We're not around, but we'll call you back real soon. Have a nice day.

JIM It's me again. I'm sorry for all the calls. But Linda, if I could just hear your voice, if you'd only acknowledge that I . . .

LINDA *(O.S.) (Picking up phone)* What do you want, Jim?

JIM You're there.

LINDA *(O.S.)* Yeah. I'm here.

JIM Linda . . . I love you.

LINDA *(O.S.) (Loud exhale)* Don't say that. You know it's not true.

JIM It's the only true thing I know anymore.

LINDA *(O.S.)* We made a mistake. Let's not make it worse.

JIM A mistake? That was no mistake.

LINDA *(O.S.)* I was lonely. You took advantage.

JIM Me? I took advantage of you? You hugged me! You kissed me! You're the one who—

CLICK.

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – DAY
Jim is walking quickly back to his classroom. He passes Paul.

PAUL Hey, Mr. M. Big day, huh?

Jim waves Paul off with a gesture that says "not right now."

INT. CARVER – JIM'S CLASSROOM – DAY
Larry is just finishing his count. The ballots are on a desk in front of him, neatly organized into three piles. Jim enters.

JIM *(Impatient)* What d'you got?

LARRY I'm not supposed to tell. Not until you've counted too. We're each supposed to make an independent count.

JIM You're kidding, right?

LARRY I thought those were the rules, Mr. McAllister.

JIM Larry, we're not electing the fucking Pope here. Just tell me who won.

Jim's use of profanity scares Larry, and he responds reluctantly.

LARRY It's a squeaker, Mr. M. I've got Tracy by a vote. Just one vote.

Jim, who hasn't cared about any of this today, suddenly takes note. He stares blankly at Larry as the news sinks in.

LARRY Mr. M.?

JIM Huh. Okay. Well, I guess I'd better do my count.

Jim scoops up the three piles of ballots and takes them to his desk.

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – DAY
Tracy exits the GIRLS' BATHROOM carrying a somewhat absurdly shaped BATHROOM PASS. She starts to head back toward her class, but she catches herself and looks around sneakily. She heads in the opposite direction.

Tracy rounds a corner and slinks toward a room, a special room. She slows down and peeks in the window of the door. She sees –

LARRY FOUCH
sitting at the back of the classroom, staring front.

Tracy presses her face to see what Larry is staring at –

JIM
at his desk counting ballots.

LARRY
catches sight of Tracy in the window.

TRACY
crosses her fingers by her ears and gives a questioning look.

LARRY
sneaks a guilty look at Jim, who is absorbed in his counting.

Then, against his better judgment he flashes Tracy a quick, furtive THUMBS-UP.

TRACY
suddenly disappears from the window.

IN THE EMPTY HALLWAY – Tracy pogos with unbridled joy.

TRACY *(V.O.)* You know that moment when they announce the winner of a beauty pageant? When Miss Texas or whoever suddenly realizes she's Miss America, and all she can do is scream and weep and hug the losers? I had my moment in the hallway that Tuesday afternoon with no one to hug but myself.

She pulls herself together enough to peek through the window of the OTHER DOOR to Jim's classroom, the window behind which Jim is still busily doing his count.

INT. CARVER – JIM'S CLASSROOM – DAY
Jim counts out the last of the ballots, mouthing the numbers to himself.

JIM *(V.O.)* I was at the end of my count when it happened. I'd come up with exactly the same numbers as Larry: Tracy had won the election by a single vote, 256 to 257. I was about to announce my tally when . . .

Jim looks up and sees—

TRACY
in the window, her face exploding with joy. She FREEZES.

We move closer to Jim in SLOW MOTION. What actually occurs in a split-second is suspended in time.

JIM *(V.O.)* The sight of Tracy at that moment affected me in a way I can't fully explain. Part of it was that she was spying, but

mostly it was her face. Looking at her, you might think she was a sweet, innocent teenage girl. But she wasn't sweet. And she wasn't innocent. She was selfish and cynical and ambitious and thought nothing of destroying the lives of others to get to the top. Who knew how high she would climb in life, how many people would suffer because of her? I had to stop her now.

Tracy UNFREEZES and darts out of sight. Jim glances at Larry. Larry is writing in a notebook.

JIM'S HAND creeps up from his lap and onto the pile of TRACY VOTES. His fingers nimbly count two ballots and pull them off the desk.

Jim coughs as beneath his desk he CRUMPLES THE BALLOTS into a ball and drops them into the wastepaper basket.

JIM Larry?

LARRY *(Looking up)* Yeah?

JIM I think we've got a problem.

INT. CARVER PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE – DAY
Walt is just finishing counting the ballots on his desk. Larry and Jim stand over him.

WALT 253 . . . 254 . . . 255. I get the same as you Jim. Looks like Paul's our president.

LARRY No way! It doesn't make sense.

WALT Sorry. My figures work out exactly the same as Jim's. 256 for Paul, 255 for Tracy.

LARRY And 290 "disregards," right?

WALT If you say so.

JIM Mostly Tammy fans.

LARRY See! It doesn't add up. There are only 801 ballots but 803 people voted. Two votes are missing. Check the register.

JIM He's right. Two people must have pocketed their ballots. Usually it's more.

LARRY But they were there! I counted 803 votes.

JIM It happens, Larry. People make mistakes.

LARRY I didn't make a mistake. Every vote was there when you sat down.

WALT Whoa! Easy, Fouch. I don't like where you're going.

LARRY I'm telling you, Dr. Hendricks, every vote was accounted for.

JIM *(Stern)* Larry? We've got twenty-five minutes until the assembly, and we still have to do counts for VP, Treasurer and Secretary. Mr. Hendricks and I have both verified the numbers, and unless you can come up with the ballots you claim are missing—

LARRY But, Mr. M.—

WALT Fouch, that's enough! End of story.

INT. CARVER – GYM – DAY
AN ASSEMBLY – The students are taking their seats on the bleachers.

ON THE FLOOR are all the candidates: three for secretary, two for treasurer, one for vice president, two for president.

PAUL AND TRACY
sit side by side. Paul seems a little overwhelmed by the whole thing. Tracy leans over and offers her hand.

TRACY Paul, I just want you to know that no matter how this turns out, you've run a wonderful campaign. It's been fun competing with you.

PAUL Yeah, you too, Tracy. I'm just glad it's over.

TRACY Yeah.

CLOSE ON PAUL

PAUL *(V.O.)* You know, I don't understand why everybody badmouthed Tracy all the time. She was always super-nice to me.

Jim approaches the microphone.

JIM If we could get started. People! Once the winners are announced, we can all go home, okay?

The students quiet down.

JIM Some contests are so well fought that it seems unfair for someone to win and someone to lose. I think that's the case with all the candidates you see before you today. All of them are highly qualified and embody the, uh, the integrity we expect from our school leadership.

ON TRACY – Jim's voice momentarily recedes.

TRACY *(V.O.)* Act surprised. Walk slowly to the podium. Be modest. Thank them for this incredible honor.

JIM That said, the whole point of an election is to choose winners, and that you have done. We'll begin with president.

Jim pulls a folded paper from his back pocket.

JIM Let me add that this was an extraordinarily close race. It's my pleasure to announce the next president of George Washington Carver High School.

Tracy just can't wait. Smiling, she STANDS UP.

JIM Paul Metzler!

The crowd breaks into applause—and laughter.

ON TRACY – As she sits, her smile belies her horror and humiliation.

This spread pages **90-97** of original script

Paul begins his acceptance speech. We cut alternately to a thrilled Lisa; a stunned Tracy, tears forming at the corners of her eyes; and to Jim, who watches the events with shifty eyes, his mouth dry and tasting of metal.

PAUL Geez, you guys, thanks a lot. I mean, wow, thanks. I promise to do my best and really do a good job and be a good president. And I want to thank Lisa Flanagan for being a super campaign manager. And I just want to say that I think Tracy would have made a great president too and that she really deserves a big hand.

The auditorium erupts into applause and whistles, and Jim takes the microphone again.

JIM And now, for vice president . . .

EXT. GRANDMOTHER'S BAKERY/RESTAURANT – DUSK
In the growing darkness, the restaurant radiates its distinctive orange glow. The parking lot is nearly empty.

INT. GRANDMOTHER'S BAKERY/RESTAURANT – DUSK
Jim sits alone at a booth by the window, finishing a slice of apple pie. He gets the attention of a WAITRESS and holds up his coffee cup.

JIM Could I get a . . . ?

As Jim gets his warm-up, in walk the Metzlers: Paul, Dick and Jo. Jim notices them as they wait to be seated. He wishes he were invisible.

As a PERKY HOSTESS leads the family to a table, Paul spots Jim. Here it comes.

PAUL Wow! Mr. McAllister! This is so wild. We came to celebrate my victory, and I can't believe it. Here, these are my parents.

Jim stands up awkwardly.

DICK METZLER *(Extending his hand)* Hi. Dick Metzler. My wife—

PAUL This is great.

JIM *(Extending his hand)* Jim McAllister.

JO METZLER *(Extending her hand)* Jo Metzler. You know, Paul just thinks the world of you. Oh, if you could just hear him . . .

DICK Yeah, say, apparently you've really come behind him, really helped him out there with the student council thing and all.

PAUL I never would have ran if it wasn't for Mr. M.

JIM Paul doesn't need any of my help. He's going places. You should be very proud.

JO We are.

DICK Having a problem with your eye there?

JO Dick . . .

JIM Just a bee sting.

DICK You ought to get that looked at. Shot of cortisone or something.

JIM Thanks, I'll be fine.

DICK Anyway, we're awful sorry about what went on with our other one, you know, our Tammy.

JO We were mortified . . .

JIM Oh, she's not a bad girl. She'll come around.

JO . . . but we've had some good talks, and I think we're sorting things out. We're starting her at Sacred Heart in the fall.

JIM Good school.

DICK Say, you're all alone. Why don't you join us?

PAUL Yeah!

JIM Oh, no. No. I'm just finishing up here, and I've got to get home.

PAUL *(To his parents)* Why don't you guys go sit down, okay? I'll catch up in a minute? I want to talk to Mr. M. about some important stuff.

DICK All right. Well, sure nice to meet you.

JO So nice.

JIM You bet.

The Metzlers go, and Paul slides in across from Jim.

PAUL So, Mr. M., I was starting to think about ideas for next year. I was thinking it would be cool to have, like a carnival. With rides. And, you know, it could be for, like, Muscular Dystrophy.

Jim tries to smile and seem attentive, but we sense his profound fatigue and his profound sadness.

PAUL And on Halloween we could have a haunted house. But a really good haunted house, not like those cheesy bad ones. You know, more like the radio station ones. This one would be really scary. And for Homecoming—well, you know how last year's theme was—

JIM Paul . . . Paul . . . . We'll have plenty of time to get into all this later. A whole year, in fact. Right now I just need to finish my pie and get home.

PAUL Oh, okay. Yeah, sorry.

The wind out of his sails, Paul gets up and is about to go when—

PAUL Just one more thing. So, Mr. M., uh, do you think Tracy's going to be okay? I saw her face after the assembly, and I think she's taking it pretty hard.

JIM Don't worry about Tracy. She'll be fine.

INT. TRACY'S BEDROOM – NIGHT
CLOSE ON TRACY – her face drained and pallid, her eyes red and bleary: she is exhausted from crying.

TRACY One vote . . . one vote . . .

She falls again headlong into the throes of despair. Her mouth contorts into a rictus of agony, and there issues an almost feral cry of pain. Her anguish grows convulsive.

Barbara Flick comes in and sits on the bed. She's carrying a PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE and a glass of milk.

BARBARA Why don't you take a couple of my pills, darling? You'll feel better.

Tracy takes the pills and sips the milk weakly. Her mother kisses her.

BARBARA Don't worry . . . don't worry . . . sshhhhh . . . that's it, baby . . . that's it, darling. Everything's going to be fine.

She lays Tracy on the bed, and Tracy begins to quiet. Barbara kisses her again and rises to leave. At the door she pauses to add a few final words of comfort.

BARBARA Maybe you needed more posters, honey. Or if you'd taken my suggestions about your speech. I don't know. We'll figure it out.

EXT. MCALLISTER FRONT PORCH – NIGHT
Jim stands at his front door, beaten and ashamed. He lifts a hand and knocks. After a moment the door opens, and there is Diane. She looks at Jim in silence. Her expression reveals nothing, but there is a deadness in her eyes.

JIM Diane, I . . .

Diane closes the door in his face.

INT. SAFARI MOTEL LOBBY – NIGHT
Jim is checking in again, filling out a registration card.

LANCE Eye's looking better.

Jim just keeps writing. Lance reaches for a key.

LANCE Did you want the same room?

INT. SAFARI MOTEL INNER LOBBY – NIGHT
CLOSE ON A VENDING MACHINE – as a TRAVEL TOILETRIES KIT is mechanically nudged toward the edge of its display row. It tips forward, about to fall, but gets stuck against the front glass.

JIM
stares blankly at his trapped item. Then, with sudden brute force, he grabs the machine by its sides and shakes it violently.

FADE OUT

UNDER BLACK –
we hear the BEEP, BEEP, BEEP of a ringing alarm clock.

INT. SAFARI MOTEL ROOM – DAY
Jim opens his eyes from a deep sleep.

AT THE WINDOW – Jim pulls open the curtain, lets the sunshine in.

JIM *(V.O.)* The next day I woke up resolved to get my life back on track. The way I saw it, Diane's kicking me out of the house had been a good thing, a wake-up call. It wasn't a setback. It was an opportunity.

EXT. DO-IT-YOURSELF CAR WASH – DAY
From inside Jim's car, we watch Jim hurriedly hose and scrub the outside.

JIM *(V.O.)* I figured we just needed a little time to work things out. And I was certain our marriage would emerge even stronger from the experience.

INT. CARVER HIGH OFFICE – DAY
Clean and refreshed and whistling, Jim pops in to check his box, giving a wave to Miss Beeder.

JIM *(V.O.)* The election was behind me, and the worst was over. After all, what harm had really been done? Nobody was dead.

JIM Hi, Pat.

Jim continues to whistle as he looks through his mail.

MISS BEEDER Uh, Jim?

JIM Hmm?

MISS BEEDER Walt needs to see you.

JIM Oh. Okay.

Still absorbed in his papers, Jim heads over to Walt's door.

INT. CARVER PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

JIM You rang?

Jim stops cold. Walt is not alone. Barbara Flick and a bleary-eyed Tracy are there. So are Larry Fouch, Ron Bell, and Lowell the janitor. Prominently displayed on Walt's desk are TWO CRINKLED BALLOTS. Jim takes an eternal few seconds to piece it together.

WALT Mr. McAllister, I hope you can help us clear something up.

BARBARA Look at his face! He knows he's been caught. Look at his face! *(To Jim)* Your ass is grass, mister!

LARRY You said I was a liar! You're the liar, you're the—

WALT Larry, you just take it easy.

All turn and stare at Jim. Come to think of it, he does look awfully guilty.

INT. CARVER SPANISH CLASS – DAY
MS. HOY leads the class in recitation. Paul responds along with his *compañeros.*

MS. HOY Yo—

CLASS —pierdo.

MS. HOY Tú—

CLASS —pierdes.

MS. HOY El/ella—

CLASS —pierde.

A STUDENT AIDE enters the classroom and hands a note to the teacher, who upon reading the note looks up at Paul.

MS. HOY Señor presidente?

The class laughs fondly. Paul looks around, beaming with embarrassment and pride.

MS. HOY Quieren verte en la oficina.

PAUL Huh?

INT. CARVER HALLWAY – DAY
Paul walks down the hall, a bounce in his step on this fine spring morning.

PAUL Señor presidente. Yo soy señor presidente . . . El grande presidente . . .

PAUL *(V.O.)* I don't know why, but finding out there was a mistake and I hadn't won the election after all didn't bother me that much. Winning had seemed kind of unreal anyway. I guess I should have voted for myself. Oh, well.

Paul reaches the school office and continues on to—

INT. CARVER PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS
Everyone is still there, waiting.

WALT *(Standing up)* Take a seat, son. We've got something hard to tell you.

PAUL Is Tammy okay?

WALT It's about the election.

JIM *(V.O.)* After Paul got the bad news, Walt asked for a few minutes alone with me.

EVERYONE DISSOLVES OUT OF FRAME
and we PAN to the door, where, with a sense of finality, Walt shows Jim out.

JIM *(V.O.)* It was very simple, really. I offered my resignation, and he accepted. Very quietly, it was all over for Jim McAllister at Carver High.

FADE TO BLACK

UNDER BLACK –
A telephone's insistent RING . . . RING . . . RING . . .

JIM *(V.O.)* But it didn't stay quiet for long.

INT. AMERICAN FAMILY INN MOTEL – MORNING
Awakened from a deep sleep, Jim lunges for the phone. In his delirium –

JIM Linda?

VOICE Excuse me, I'm looking for a Mr. James T. McAllister.

JIM Speaking.

VOICE Oh, hi. I'm Cindy Lindstrom, Action News Four. If you have a sec, I'd like to chat about what I understand was an "irregularity" with the student council election yesterday at Carver . . .

Jim slams the phone down. Immediately it rings again.

CLOSE on Jim's terrified face.

JIM *(V.O.)* Just when I thought things couldn't get any worse, they did.

INSERT – *OMAHA WORLD-HERALD*
The blare of a trumpet accompanies the headline "SCANDAL MARS SCHOOL ELECTION." There are two PHOTOS – one of Tracy, one of Jim accepting his teacher-of-the-year award. Another headline reads "CARVER STUDENT PLANS LAWSUIT." "DEMOCRACY IN ACTION?" heads a columnist's column.

JIM *(V.O.)* Suddenly everyone knew who I was—that corrupt teacher who tried to crush the dreams of an innocent girl. Overnight all the good things I'd ever done in my life evaporated. Outraged parents, the superintendent and school board, even the mayor—all rushed to denounce me.

INSERT – U.S. MAP
RADIO WAVES circle out from a beacon in Omaha, eventually filling the country from Maine to California.

JIM *(V.O.)* Soon the wire services picked up on the story, and news of my disgrace spread across the country. It was the kind

of absurd little news item people post on the bulletin board at work or e-mail each other. I guess it did make a good story—I probably would have used it in class.

On the soundtrack: growing anonymous LAUGHTER.

INT. TV STATION MAKE-UP ROOM – DAY
Tracy is in a chair receiving final touches on her hair and make-up. She clearly enjoys the treatment.

JIM *(V.O.)* And you can bet Tracy was right there to fan the flames.

TRACY *(V.O.)* Unless you've been through it yourself, it might be hard to understand the enormous pressures of being at the center of a media firestorm. Whenever I felt like giving up, I reminded myself how important it is to speak out against injustice. Too many women are frightened of what will happen if they dare to tell the truth. Not me.

A TV FLOOR DIRECTOR pokes his head into the room.

FLOOR DIRECTOR Ready, Miss Flick?

TRACY Ready!

INT. TV STUDIO – DAY
Tracy is being interviewed on A.M. OMAHA. The set includes a large fake potted plant and a garish colorful backdrop.

TRACY I'm still in shock. I mean, I looked up to Mr. McAllister. We all did. But I guess it goes to show no matter how much you think you know someone, you never really do.

HOST Can you think of any reason he would have wanted to do such a thing?

A tiny pause.

TRACY None whatsoever.

INT. JIM'S MOTEL ROOM – DAY
ON TV – Tracy's interview continues.

PAN FROM THE TV –
Lying on the bed in his underwear, an unshaven and disheveled Jim stares vaguely in the direction of the television. Empty take-out containers and beverage cans surround him.

JIM *(V.O.)* To top it all off, Diane had started divorce proceedings. She was completely unforgiving about the thing with Linda. About other things too, I guess. In the end she took almost everything, including the house. I got the car.

EXT. OMAHA STREETS – DAY
Jim pulls up to a red light and takes a cursory glance at the driver of the car next to him. He sees –

LARRY FOUCH glaring over at him. Unsure how to react, Jim attempts a feeble smile.

Larry continues to scowl, his anger building, until finally he SPITS at Jim's car.

JIM *(V.O.)* Then one day I realized it was time to get out of Omaha and move on.

FADE OUT

UNDER BLACK
we hear the opening bars of a bouncy TIJUANA BRASS SONG.

EXT. METZLER CEMENT PLANT – NIGHT
PAUL IS DANCING,
twisting to the music at a PARTY, a giant grin on his face, a BIG SOMBRERO with tassels on his head. Behind him we can see an enormous illuminated GRAVEL CONVEYOR. SUPER-IMPOSED: "ONE YEAR LATER."

PAUL *(V.O.)* Senior year was great! Sure, I didn't get to play ball, but I got elected homecoming king *and* prom king anyway. I got into Nebraska like I wanted and early-rushed Phi Delts. At the end of the year me and my buddies threw a bitching Mexican party down at the cement plant. Shit, that was a good party. That was a *good* party!

LATER –
Paul is at a keg, pumping it up and serving himself a beer. He brings the brew to his lips, grows pensive.

PAUL *(V.O.)* Sometimes when I think back to the election, I wonder what would have happened if I'd actually won. Maybe my whole life would be different. Like I might never have gone to Yosemite with Greg and Randy.

Paul takes a BIG GULP and looks into—

HIS PLASTIC CUP
filled with beer.

PAUL *(V.O.)* Or maybe I'd be dead.

FADE OUT

UNDER BLACK
we hear a distinctive AIRY HISS.

INT. SACRED HEART BATHROOM – DAY
Tammy takes a big toke off a JOINT.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* Catholic school was great!

This spread pages **104-109** of original script

Tammy and JENNIFER, a Sacred Heart schoolmate, are jammed into a bathroom stall.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* I mean, the teachers kind of sucked, and they were supposedly way more strict, but you could get away with murder.

Tammy hands off the doob to Jennifer who takes a huge hit.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* The best thing about Sacred Heart was meeting Jennifer.

Jennifer looks at Tammy. Tammy looks at Jennifer.

JENNIFER MONTAGE –
accompanied by the early '70s song, "Jennifer."
SUPER-8 style glimpses of Tammy and Jennifer in the Sacred Heart hallways, Jennifer in the park, Jennifer dancing in Tammy's room, and finally, Jennifer SWINGING.

TAMMY *(V.O.)* All those feelings I had for Lisa were just preparing me for the real thing. Jennifer and I are soul mates, and we're never, ever, *ever* going to be apart.

FADE OUT

INT. CARVER STUDENT COUNCIL OFFICE – DAY
Tracy officiates a MEETING.

TRACY Order. Order. Order! Let's vote on this issue. All those in favor . . .

TRACY *(V.O.)* In spite of the election travesty, I went on to have a highly successful senior year, full of personal achievement! I graduated in the top 7th percentile of my class, and I got into Georgetown like I wanted—with scholarships.

TRACY Approved!

INT. AUDITORIUM – NIGHT
It's GRADUATION. In cap and gown, Tracy inches forward as each name is called.

TRACY *(V.O.)* As far as Mr. McAllister was concerned, you might be surprised, but I hardly thought about him at all anymore. I guess I was just too busy. Besides, nobody had heard from him in a long time. It was almost like he'd never existed in the first place.

VOICE *(O.S.)* Tracy . . . Enid . . . Flick.

Tracy smiles a big smile and heads onto the stage.

INT. GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY DORM HALLWAY – NIGHT
Five or six STUDENTS are sitting against the walls, hanging out and drinking beer. MUSIC blasts into the hallway from someone's open door. Further down the hall two other STUDENTS kick a SOCCER BALL back and forth.

This spread pages **109-112** of original script

TRACY *(V.O.)* When I got to Georgetown I thought I'd finally be among people more like me—you know, smarter, more ambitious people. I was sure that finally I'd make some true friends. But it wasn't like that at all.

A door opens, and a very miffed Tracy in pajamas bursts into the hallway.

TRACY WILL YOU PLEASE BE QUIET!

As Tracy slams her door shut, the students make mock "sshhh" and "ooooo" sounds and crack up.

TRACY *(V.O.)* A lot of them were just rich spoiled kids who didn't know how lucky they had it and didn't think they'd have to work hard to get ahead.

INT. TRACY'S DORM ROOM – NIGHT
Tracy sits at her desk and renews her studies with ferocious concentration.

TRACY *(V.O.)* But that's okay. I've come to accept that very few people are truly destined to be special, and we're solo flyers, a breed apart. I guess it really is like Dave said—if you're going to be great, you've got to be lonely.

She takes a sip of her DIET MUG ROOT BEER. Looking at the can, she grows suddenly pensive.

TRACY *(V.O.)* You know, sometimes I really miss Dave. I wonder whatever happened to him.

INT. REAL VALU HARDWARE – DAY
Wearing the red vest and "Ask me" button of a Real Valu foot soldier, Dave stands above a case of SPRAY PAINT, stamping prices on every cap.

TRACY *(V.O.)* Maybe he finally finished his novel.

EXT. TURKANA BASIN, AFRICA – 1.7 MILLION B.C. – DAY
A hirsute early HOMO ERECTUS, frozen in time, squats above a half-devoured CARIBOU CARCASS.

JIM *(V.O.)* What happens to a man when he's driven from his home, cast out of society . . .

Nearby, his equally hairy SHE-MATE fends off a HYENA.

JIM *(V.O.)* . . . stripped of his place in the world, reduced to his very essence?

EXT. LE MOUSTIER, FRANCE – 50,000 B.C. – DAY
A motionless NEANDERTHAL gnaws on a piece of animal hide.

JIM *(V.O.)* How can he survive? Where can he go?

Jim now steps in front of this MUSEUM DIORAMA. Smiling, he looks directly into camera, beckoning us.

JIM Right this way!

As he walks out of frame, we follow his motion with a—

WIPE TO:
EXT. NEW YORK CITY – HELICOPTER SHOT

JIM *(V.O.)* New York City!

EXT. NEW YORK – MONTAGE
Buoyant MUSIC and car HORNS accompany our introduction to Jim's new environs: busy midtown PEDESTRIANS, TIMES SQUARE at night, GRAND CENTRAL STATION at rush-hour.

EXT. THE STATUE OF LIBERTY – DAY

JIM *(V.O.)* For centuries people have come to New York seeking refuge from their troubled lives, leaving their past behind.

PAN to Jim on the bow of the STATEN ISLAND FERRY, looking at Lady Freedom with almost tearful reverence.

JIM *(V.O.)* Now I am one of them.

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS – DAY
Jim takes a big bite of a HOT DOG just bought from a vendor.

JIM *(V.O.)* Besides, I'd always dreamed of living in New York. All that excitement and culture and diversity. What a great place to start over!

EXT. EAST VILLAGE – DAY
Jim converses amiably with two GUYS sporting shaved heads and multi-pierced ears. They hold hands.

JIM *(V.O.)* Living in the city brings new surprises all the time. Once in a while I even bump into former students of mine from Carver.

INT. JIM'S NYC APARTMENT HALLWAY – DAY
Jim opens the door to leave, and beyond we see his impossibly tiny if neat apartment.

JIM *(V.O.)* Oh sure, my apartment's a little smaller than what I was used to back in Omaha, and the rent's pretty darn steep . . .

EXT. AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY – DAY
Whistling, Jim trots up the front stairs past the statue of Teddy Roosevelt on his horse.

JIM *(V.O.)* After hunting around for a while, I finally landed a job in the education department of the Museum of Natural History.

INT. AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY – DAY
Jim lectures a group of HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS about early New York. Behind him is a DIORAMA depicting the purchase of Manhattan from the Indians.

JIM *(V.O.)* When a school brings its students to the museum on a field trip, there's a staff of both volunteer docents and trained educators like me who pick up where their classwork leaves off. That's right—I'm teaching again.

INT. MUSEUM – DAY
AN EXHIBIT
Two short naked hairy HOMINIDS stroll near Hadar, Ethiopia, in 4 million B.C. The male has his arm around the female.

JIM *(V.O.)* And I've started seeing someone new.

REVERSE –
Jim stands with his arm around Jillian's shoulder as they look at an exhibit.

JIM *(V.O.)* You might ask if I ever saw Tracy Flick again. Well, I did. Just once.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. – ESTABLISHING
The MALL with all of its beautiful monuments.

JIM *(V.O.)* I was down in Washington checking out some of the new exhibits at the Smithsonian.

EXT. "H" STREET NW – DAY
Jim strolls along near the WHITE HOUSE, swelled with national pride. In one hand he carries a bag of souvenirs, in the other a large SODA.

JIM *(V.O.)* After an inspiring afternoon soaking up all that knowledge, I was on my way to get some Ethiopian food when—

EXT. HAY-ADAMS HOTEL – DAY
As Jim walks by this swanky hotel, he looks over and notices –

A LIMOUSINE pulling up. Not that there's anything unusual about that, but there is when TRACY FLICK emerges from the hotel and heads toward the limo. She is accompanied by a group of other WELL-DRESSED YOUNG PEOPLE.

Could it really be Tracy? Jim stops and looks again. It *is*

Tracy, seeming now very much a well-dressed-young-woman-on-the-move.

Just as Tracy approaches the limo, she turns and seems to glance directly at Jim. But her expression reveals nothing, and she quickly gets in.

JIM *(V.O.)* I'll never know if she saw me—probably not—but in that moment, all those bad memories, all the things I'd ever wanted to say to her, it all came flooding back.

INT. LIMOUSINE – DAY
CLOSE ON TRACY –
as she looks out her tinted window in the general direction of a man on the corner holding a bag. From here he looks almost homeless.

TRACY *(V.O.)* Sometimes Mr. McAllister pops into my head at the weirdest moments. Like I'll see someone who reminds me of him, or I'll smell an old familiar smell, and I'll remember all the terrible things he did to me. But you know, it doesn't make me angry anymore; I just feel sorry for him. I mean, when I think about where I ended up and how exciting my life is, and all the important people I'm meeting, and then I think about Mr. M. and what he must be doing, it just makes me sad. Somebody told me he became a tour guide or a museum guard or something.

EXT. STREET – CONTINUOUS
CLOSE ON JIM again.

JIM *(V.O.)* My first impulse was to run over there, pound on her window and demand that she admit she tore down those posters and lied and cheated her way into winning that election. But instead I just stood there. And in that moment I suddenly realized I wasn't angry at her anymore. I just felt sorry for her. I mean, when I think about my new life and all the exciting things I'm doing, and I think about what her life must be like—probably still getting up at five in the morning to pursue her pathetic ambitions—it just makes me sad.

The limousine pulls out of the driveway and onto the street.

JIM *(V.O.)* I mean, where is she really trying to get to anyway? And what is she doing in that limo? Who the hell does she think she is?

Suddenly Jim HURLS his soft drink at the limo, and it BURSTS against the back window. The limo SCREECHES to a halt.

Panicking, Jim turns and RUNS in the opposite direction.

INT. NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM – HALL OF MINERALS – DAY
Jim stands before a group of SCHOOLCHILDREN, holding a large rock in one hand.

JIM *(V.O.)* But that's all ancient history now. I've got a whole new life. That's what's great about America—no matter who you are or what you've done, you can always start over.

JIM So would that make this an igneous rock or a sedimentary rock? What's the difference between igneous and sedimentary anyway?

A BLONDE LITTLE GIRL thrusts her hand in the air, vaguely reminding us of someone. Jim notices her but continues to search the group.

JIM Anybody?

THE END

This spread pages **112-116** of original script

The version of *Election* published here is Payne and Taylor's fourth draft, completed October 1997. The original script was 116 pages.

Election

Release date: April 23, 1999

Directed by Alexander Payne

Produced by Albert Berger, Ron Yerxa, David Gale, and Keith Samples

Executive Producer: Van Toffler

A Paramount Pictures Release of an MTV Films Production

PRINCIPAL CAST
Jim McAllister: *Matthew Broderick*
Tracy Flick: *Reese Witherspoon*
Paul Metzler: *Chris Klein*
Tammy Metzler: *Jessica Campbell*
Dave Novotny: *Mark Harelik*
Linda Novotny: *Delaney Driscoll*
Diane McAllister: *Molly Hagan*
Walt Hendricks: *Phil Reeves*

Based on the novel *Election* by Tom Perrotta.

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Adapting and Directing *Election*

A Talk with Alexander Payne & Jim Taylor

Payne

David Johnson

Taylor

Alexander Payne, director and co-screenwriter of *Election*, was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska. He studied history and Spanish literature at Stanford University, during which time he spent extended periods in Spain and Colombia. Payne later earned an M.F.A. from UCLA's graduate program in film production, where he made several shorts, including his 50-minute thesis film, *The Passion of Martin*, which played at film festivals around the world.

Jim Taylor, co-screenwriter of *Election*, grew up in Seattle and received his B.A. from Pomona College in English literature. After graduating, he worked at Cannon Films in Los Angeles as a production coordinator and development assistant. In 1987, he traveled to China with a grant to study that country's motion picture industry. Returning to L.A., Taylor worked for three years with director Ivan Passer. In 1992, he used his winnings from an appearance on "Wheel of Fortune" to move to New York and enroll in the graduate film program at New York University, where he received his M.F.A.

Citizen Ruth—Payne and Taylor's first collaborative feature film—premiered at the 1996 Sundance Film Festival, and won Best Film at the Munich Film Festival (1997). *Election* was adapted from Tom Perrotta's novel of the same name.

Not many filmmakers are working in satire these days. One reviewer wrote that you two were the best of them.

Payne: David Denby said we are the "only" true social satirists working in American film today.

Taylor: If we go down in a plane the nation will mourn. We always fly separately.

One review said it was the first real political satire since Shampoo.

Payne: Manohla Dargis. Not that I read reviews or anything.

Taylor: The reviews have been embarrassingly positive. It's very gratifying.

And very smart reviews. Margo Jefferson opened her discussion of Election *in* The New York Times *with the existential notion that "hell is other people." Now, is there anyone out there doing satire that you're influenced by?*

Taylor: Harry Shearer.

Payne: Also, when we were growing up there was *That Was the Week That Was*, and *The Smothers Brothers*, and Richard Pryor. And then *National Lampoon Radio Hour*. But does it really influence us?

Taylor: I love *Firesign Theater*. But that's not really satire. Satire is one of those words where you need to pull out the dictionary and look at the definition.

Which brings us to that facetious question you pose in Elec-

tion—*what is the difference between morals and ethics? I was rocketed right back to being in school and not knowing the answer.*

Taylor: We don't know the answer, either. People thought we were making a point about morals and ethics, when in fact we were making a point about apples and oranges. We love the pomposity, that a teacher would ask a question when probably he doesn't even really know the answer.

Tom Perrotta's novel is very topical. It opens with the Glen Ridge, New Jersey rape case. You decided to take references to current events out of the screenplay?

Taylor: The book was centered around the '92 election, and we wanted to move it away from that. Also, the movie took a long time to make. It's hard to be topical in a movie because so much changes while you're making it.

Payne: We're not interested in topical things. Even Elizabeth Dole, Connie Chung and Madonna will date the movie one day.

Taylor That's the advantage of television shows that do satire, or even Harry Shearer who has a weekly radio show. They can really jump on things right away and deal with them.

Payne: I've got to say this, though—when we're making these movies, I don't think in terms of satire. We actually didn't think of the world beyond the world of the film. This just seemed like a good story, and a comedy. Early on we had the idea, how much do we want to kind of suggest things in a larger political arena, and how much is this film a microcosm? And we did say, we're not interested in that. We just like the people.

Even though you added scenes and changed a lot from the novel, the deadpan comedic spirit of the book is still there. And there are lines in the novel that are almost like a Tex Avery cartoon. "I wanted to slow her down before she flattened the whole school," is one. I wondered if cartoons were an influence , especially scenes like when Tracy does that pogo stick jump.

Payne: I'm a big Tex Avery fan.

Taylor: He references cartoons, even in *Citizen Ruth*. And one thing for sure, whether it's a satire or not, it's a comedy. At some point in comedy you're going to exaggerate the characters. How much you exaggerate, how broad you make it, is open to question, but I guess if we're going broad, like her pogo-ing around—

Payne: Is pogo-ing in the book or did we come up with that?

You came up with that. In the book, it said that she won and that all she had was herself to hug.

Payne: Which we had in the film, too. There was a voiceover, "No one to hug but myself." We had that in the film up until the mix, and then she pogo-ed so well, and the music was so nice, that I thought it would be better without it.

Taylor: Did Reese Witherspoon come up with that pogo-ing?

Payne: *[whispers]* I showed her how to do it.

She was magnificent. In the book, her character wore a red dress and was supposed to have this incredible body. You made a decision to not make her a sexpot?

Taylor: Yeah, although my only disappointment in the translation from book to screenplay to film is the loss of real sexual tension between her and McAllister. Even though she is flirty with him in the film, in the book it is a powerful driving force that everybody would want to sleep with her, and it got toned down.

Payne: I just thought the teenage sexpot was a bit of a stock character. When McAllister is fantasizing about having sex with Tracy, for me it's more interesting that it's coming exclusively from him. And it's this hate-fuck he has with her. It makes it more about him and how screwed up he is.

Taylor: I guess we didn't want her to be just a femme fatale, or that that's why she was wielding all this power. It was much more about her being a focus-driven individual than that she had this great body. And, in the book, the student body knows she had that affair. We felt they would never elect her as class president if they knew she had an affair with a teacher.

Payne: It's more interesting if she's ostensibly not so sexy but has sex.

Taylor: The great thing about Reese is that she's a really attractive woman, but in portraying the character, she suppressed her sexuality and put that energy into Tracy's political ambitions.

She's has the Lolita thing, but grim and business-like.

Payne: Denby called her a combination of Pat and Dick Nixon. If you really want to talk about the sexuality of Tracy, there was a scene where she's lying on the bed and Dave's taking his clothes off and he's got a big white pimple on his back—we shot all that and it's actually really funny and good. We cut it

> *"Voiceover is the single greatest contribution of talking cinema. More so than dialogue even."*

because of length. But I was very conscious that she be presented more like a victim and not really like a full participant. That she's really a sweet girl. And what you see visiting high schools is that they're just kids. They're not the beautiful vixen sexpots that you see in teen movies. That's completely fake. Sure there are some oversexed kids in high school, prematurely precocious sexual stuff, but they're really kids. Tracy Flick's a kid.

Taylor: The thing about being on the cusp of adulthood is that you might be developing things that make you seem very adult, but you're really this mix of a vulnerable kid who could be taken advantage of, and someone who's learning to assert themselves.

There's a feeling you get from the film, and from the novel,

too, that no one can see themselves and that it would take a catastrophe to launch an adult out of that blindness.

Payne: That may be what's common in both *Citizen Ruth* and *Election*—somehow we come up with very unaware people, we find very unaware people interesting. Jim McAllister is constantly, unconsciously, totally creating the crisis in his own life, so that he can break out of it. And it's all in denial. "My life is great, I love teaching." And he hates teaching. He hates his life and he hates his wife. He has to break out and do something new. So he just changes his life, but he doesn't grow.

There are wonderful moments when the image and the words are at counterpoint. For instance, when Tracy's voiceover says something about how "Dave really understands me," but the image is of him shoving her head down in the car so no one can see her.

Payne: She says, "That's the first time someone ever saw the real me." That's the beauty of voiceover.

Was it a big decision to go with the multiple points of view? All About Eve *did it, but very few films try a multiple narrator.*

Taylor: We were lucky that the studio and the executives went for it. That could have been a huge sticking point and a battle.

Payne: But that's such a stupid point of view, that voiceover is bad. I love voiceover in film.

Taylor: Specifically because of the novelistic possibilities, to just get inside heads and hear thoughts.

Payne: Also, you can get more information in, and you can have that wonderful discrepancy and irony between what people say and what they do. I actually think that voiceover is the single greatest contribution of talking cinema, of talking pictures. More so than dialogue even.

You put a parallel construction at the opening—cutting between establishing McAllister and Tracy—and didn't you even give them different soundtrack songs?

Payne: It's done with score, not songs, but each is established musically, yes.

Taylor: But as far as the script goes, yes, that was very conscious. Because we were going to use four different voiceovers, we needed to set up right away the possibility that different characters were going to be able to comment on the action and that Tracy and Jim were the two principal characters. We always knew they were the principal characters, but is it Tracy's movie, is it Jim's movie, is it both their movies?

McAllister's ends up being the dominant point of view, which I thought was an interesting choice for a so-called teen movie—that the top-line point of view was an adult's.

Taylor: We couldn't really push that, because it was made for MTV Films and they have a mandate to make films for a certain age group, really, so we were encouraged to take it as far as we could in the teen direction.

What do you think of the teen movies that are out there now?

Taylor: Well, we haven't seen most of them.

Payne: *Election* got financed because of the teen craze.

But do you see Election *as a teen movie?*

Payne: Early on, I told them that I wasn't going to make a high school movie, that it was an adult movie set in a high school, and early discussions were like, well, is it going to be more like *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, or more like *Clueless*, or more like *American Graffiti*, or what? And I said, the movie it's going to be most like is probably *Citizen Ruth*.

Even though it's a comedy, you paint a very realistic portrait of high school, with the dull hallways and the inane rituals.

Payne: That's just who we are as filmmakers. Whatever world we would be exploring, we would do research and try to achieve great verisimilitude. *[laughs]* I just wanted to use that word.

Alexander, I read somewhere that your junior high school was blown away by a tornado. Was that fuel for the movie?

Payne: *[laughs]* May 6, 1975. Just the roof was blown off. But that changed my destiny. I ended up going to an all-boys Jesuit high school.

Tammy is a delightful character. You devised a very eloquent solution to reduce all the business of her going to a party and meeting a girl—you just distilled it to that one beautiful scene of her looking at the Catholic schoolgirls playing soccer.

Payne: There was one other scene that was cut, where she's pretending that she doesn't want to go to that school, while really enjoying trying on the Catholic schoolgirl uniform.

The girls try on lingerie in the book. Is that something that just seemed to not work as well in film as in a book?

Taylor: It's hard to remember. We read the novel three years ago, and then tried to put it away. We referenced it, but we really tried to reinvent it. It was given to Alexander to read first, and you said you took a while to read it because . . .

Payne: Because it was set in a high school.

Taylor: *[laughs]* As soon as I read it, it was clear to me that this was perfect for us.

What's the timing with the Monica Lewinsky scandal? Perrotta wrote the book years before that, and while you were finishing the film, that was unfolding?

Taylor: Yeah, and we didn't ever really think about it that much. Setting the ending in Washington, D.C., was not inspired by Monica Lewinsky, it was just a natural thing for the development of the story, that Tracy would do that.

But it ends up having this topicality.

Payne: But ten or twenty years from now, people won't need to know about Monica at all to still get that ending.

You tried to keep the same ending from the book, where she goes to the used car lot and McAllister signs her yearbook?

Payne: We loved that in the book, and we shot it and it's fine. But the book is more ruminative and quiet and *allowed* that ending more. The movie came out too funny and too fast-paced and too cynical, and that ending just felt wrong.

Taylor: Which is ironic because the ending is one of the things that I love most about the book and was what convinced me that it was worth making as a movie. Because in spite of all this comedy, there was this beautiful moment of grace at the end of the film.

Payne: Sentimentality can work better either in literature or film if the background is cold and those moments feel earned. Chekhov wrote about that. So I thought it would work in that way, but it didn't.

Also, in the novel, McAllister stays with his wife.

Taylor: We tried to get them back together and it just felt false.

He explodes his life, but ends up in the same place. "What's the difference between morals and ethics?" becomes "what's the difference between sedimentary and igneous rocks?"

Taylor: That's our cruel joke.

And then there's the new Tracy Flick in the audience.

Payne: That's satisfying in a traditional way because endings often relate to the beginning. You find the ending at the beginning. But this was one of those rare instances of a studio financing a new ending that's more cynical than the original ending.

So the new ending came about late in the game.

Payne: Yeah, just after we'd cut the film and previewed it, Jim and I were then given an opportunity to come up with a new ending if we wanted to. So Jim and I just holed up in a hotel for a week and thought, if this were an original, what would we have come up with?

Why are endings so hard—is it because life doesn't end?

Payne: Certainly in our case, yes. The only true ending to life is to say "it continues." And even *Citizen Ruth*, while having a seemingly victorious ending, also says, quietly—but she's going to turn that corner and take drugs again. Yet usually you face the odd pressure to give hope at the end.

Taylor: I don't think that's an odd pressure. I think it's just a cultural thing. I had an opportunity to go to China for six months and study the Chinese film industry in 1987. And one of the most striking things about Chinese films is how tragic they are. The story arc was always: things start out bad and then they get worse and worse and worse and worse until they are really terrible, and then the film is over. And everybody gets to cry a lot. So happy endings say something about Americans.

The film Sullivan's Travels *is about a comedy filmmaker who thinks he should be telling serious stories, and he finds out in the end that making people laugh is best.*

Payne: I'm not so sure I like the message of that film. It lets American cinema off the hook in a big way if they take that message too seriously. I don't think that's a very good message.

Tom Perrotta told me that everyone in the novel is "either a victimizer or a destroyer."

Taylor: That sort of polarizes them, though. We think they're all victimizers *and* destroyers. If we ever thought about them in terms of their parallels in politics, Paul was Ronald Reagan. In a certain way, Reagan's naiveté made him a destroyer—sending all the homeless people out on the street.

> *"We read the novel, then put it away. We referenced it, but really tried to reinvent it."*

And Tammy is any wild card who could upset an election?

Payne: Tammy is Perot. Well, that's who she is for Tom Perrotta.

You added McAllister being stung by a bee, and it made me think of a "Scarlet A," that he sinned and in the morning it was there on his face.

Payne: Also blindness, ancient ideas of blindness. The bee sting was Jim's idea.

Taylor: I'm really happy about the bee sting because it's an example of something that comes out of a pure instinct that *something* should happen to him at that point, but what? And then there's a brainstorm, what if he gets stung in the eye by a bee? Just a silly thing. But then it ends up working through the rest of the film as a symbol and as a comic device.

Payne: Do you like the shot in the film that establishes the bees?

I like it very much, because I only realized that you were establishing the bees the second time I saw the movie. Any reason for seeing bees in the foreground of that shot is just subliminal in the first viewing.

Payne: I'm still on the fence about that. One way I can justify it is that it's always springtime in Linda's backyard. The rest of the movie is like winter. But there are flowers, and you hear birds and you see bees, so "birds and bees." So it's reproduction, and his failure to reproduce. Then at the motel, it says "Welcome, Seed Dealers." Just ideas that mock his barrenness, his failure to produce a child. Even the opening sprinkler jet at the beginning of the film.

The lawn sprinkler was a potency symbol?

Payne: In a joking way. All of our symbols are sort of jokes. I like how they function. They don't really add something, but they add something.

When I saw that shot open the film, I knew I was in good hands. The lawn sprinkler is one of those suburban noises, what with the bland rhythm of it.

Payne: I like that that shot has no music on it, that it's bare. That shot was not in the script. The DP thought of that shot.

Taylor: I do have to say, though, that the script suggests it in a certain way. The school is "slumbering." It's a world about to wake up. It's quiet and even though the sprinkler is going, it's at rest.

I loved McAllister's establishing shot. There's the running, but when he goes through all the turns in that fence, it's like a rat maze. It says—in suburbia, this is the conveyor belt that you get on.

Payne: The school is a factory, or a prison.

Taylor: That maze, that's an example of Alexander going on location and seeing something that worked in the spirit of the script.

Payne: Actually, we constructed that, so that it would be a ridiculously rat-like maze. In fact, one of our criteria in picking the school was that it have the beginnings of a good little fence maze, one that we could build onto. You'll never see a fence like that one. And it's a direct overhead shot, as though Jim McAllister is caught like a rat in a maze.

"What's common in Citizen Ruth *and* Election *is that we come up with very unaware people."*

It's a wonderful set-up—you get a sense of a guy who's sort of sloth-like but going through the motions, and then into his world comes the gunslinger, Tracy Flick.

Taylor: That's probably the biggest difference between the novel and the film. There's more time to establish things in a novel. We really had to be serious about how, with voiceover and everything, can we quickly set up the world of the film?

You approached these characters as human beings, you weren't thinking of Tracy as a symbol of American politics?

Payne: Never. We're not so interested in that. We like people.

Taylor: In terms of writing, we're not interested in that. We can sit here now and be reflective about the film, but I think it's been a great benefit to us that we really don't have an agenda. In *Citizen Ruth*, we didn't have a political agenda to put forth. And when we did this film, we didn't have a metaphoric agenda.

Payne: If there's a political agenda in both of them, I'd say that it's political in that it's anti-political. I mean, to say we don't have a political agenda in *Citizen Ruth* . . . we don't have one that's defined by those sides *[pro-choice, pro-life]*, but maybe on some level we have one that just opposes politics as defined in that way. Showing the absurdity of human problems being defined in those ways.

The idea that a woman's body can become a battleground for political issues is very clear in that movie.

Payne: It's not so much about our communicating political ideas, but maybe asking some political questions. For me, a political question in *Citizen Ruth*, which is, again, not answered, is, what does freedom of choice mean for an animal who really can't choose? That's something I'm really interested in. I think Ruth is a poster child for court-ordered sterilization. Because really, she's an animal that needs to be spayed. So what does that mean, that she's a citizen and has rights? What does it mean that she has the right to choose, and she even has to learn what that means, and never really grasps it? Again, that's just what I enjoy in the film. Jim may not.

What you're saying sounds harsh, but when a woman is pregnant and sniffing glue, I guess you're right to put her in those terms. Getting back to Election, *you also added McAllister's sweaty race to prepare the hotel room for his tryst. Was that just to heighten his fall?*

Taylor: *[laughs]* We just thought it was funny.

Payne: And it gets him washing his butt.

Taylor: That's *your* addition.

Payne: That's in the script: "carefully washing his undercarriage." But it gets mentioned a lot—on the Internet, some people hate that, and other people really love it.

It's very funny.

Taylor: And why is it so funny? Because it's so true. People clean themselves before they think they're going to have sex, but you've never seen it in a movie, and so then just to see the truth is somehow startling.

Payne: That came from my childhood in a way, from a Redd Foxx album. He had a whole routine called "You've Got to Wash Your Ass." Before you go on a date you've got to wash your ass.

I'm curious about the amount of litter and garbage in the film. It was more in the script than in the film—people picking up garbage and throwing it away—Mr. McAllister specifically.

Taylor: That's another instinctive addition, but it's also about trying to put your problems away.

Payne: I actually disagree that it's more in the script. If you look at the film and look only for garbage, it's obsessive. Any time you see a street exterior, it's garbage day. When Mr. McAllister is listening to the speeches in the gym, way in the background you see a janitor leaning on his broom. At the end, where he gets spit on, he's being pursued by a garbage truck. When Tammy is on her bike, behind her you see garbage. When he wakes up in front of Linda's house, we open the shot on a garbage truck.

Taylor: We just had a garbage truck always on call. *[laughs]*

I ended up thinking of it in terms of how people want to hide things, flush everything down the toilet.

Taylor: You think you can tidy up everything but the garbage is still around, it's just in a can somewhere, or in the landfill.

The janitor becomes an almost mystical character. There was a line in the novel where Tammy says of the principal, "put a broom in his hand and make him an honest man." And another line that says, "they put janitors there to remind you of what happens if you don't do your schoolwork."

Payne: We actually thought a good alternative title for the film would be "The Custodian."

Taylor: That was a great one. It sounds like a Harold Pinter title. *[laughs]* I'm realizing that that's where the garbage thing came from. Of course, also because he throws away the ballot. But Tracy throws away Dave's picture in the computer, she throws away the posters. People try to make things go away but they come back.

Payne: It's even foreshadowed at the beginning of the movie. Tracy says, "none of this would have happened if Mr. McAllister hadn't meddled the way he did." Just in that moment, he picks a piece of paper off the ground and throws it away. It's a very subtle foreshadowing of how he's going to meddle later in the film.

So the janitor becomes this mute, malevolent force of judgment.

Payne: You know who he is? He's The Watcher, the comic book character. He's The Watcher who violates his code a little bit by interfering. The Watcher who only intercedes when Galactus threatens to destroy everything.

Taylor: You know what's the best thing about this interview? It's that you haven't mentioned Ferris Bueller. *[laughs]* Everyone talks about *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* in connection to this film because Matthew Broderick used to be an iconic high school student, and now here he is as a teacher.

What did you think of Rushmore, *because there's a lot of comparisons to* Rushmore*?*

Payne: Why do you think those comparisons exist? I don't think they would exist if the two films didn't come out within eight months of each other.

They're both comedic but serious, and very intelligently written high school movies, but for adults. Was there some confusion around how to market Election*? To adults, to teens?*

Taylor: Mass confusion. But in the end, I think it found its little niche, and it certainly did better than *Citizen Ruth*. In terms of whatever strategy they had for this film, it worked. And I think the posters are evocative, they put some money into it.

I thought the Pepsi/Coke thing was a stroke of genius, the idea that Tracy comparing herself to Coke inspires McAllister to get "Pepsi," or Paul, to run against her. Where did that come from?

Taylor: I'd always heard that said about Coke, that it worked hard to stay number one.

Payne: I thought I came up with that.

Taylor: *[laughs]* Maybe you did, but at least I was familiar with it when you came up with it. But it's like apples and oranges, these fake decisions you have in your life.

Payne: I think it actually started more organically, when we were writing the scene in the parking lot. When she says "Coca-Cola's number one."

Taylor: Yeah, so we thought, what's the alternative to Coke?

One of the funniest things in the film is that tribal music that comes in when Tracy goes on the warpath.

Payne: It's from a 1966 spaghetti western called *Navajo Joe*. I had heard that many times, and then in the editing room it just came to me to put it in there. We thought it was just going to be temporary, but then when we could find nothing to replace it that worked as well, we got the rights to it.

You also added the power station.

Taylor: My brother used to watch the tollbooths near our house. When he was feeling melancholy, he would just go watch the toll takers taking money. So I was thinking, what would be an interesting thing to do if you're feeling like an alienated kid? Because teen suicide is such a big thing, those thoughts of "I just want to go away and evaporate."

"You know what's the best thing about this interview? You haven't mentioned Ferris Bueller."

Payne: It's the most poetic part of the film.

She's an alien. Tammy's clearly a displaced being who shouldn't be in that particular family, so it works well.

Taylor: You can say that Paul's the only nice guy in the film, and she's the only really honest person. She seems to really know herself better than anyone else.

She's delusional, though. You added the romantic scenes on the swings, which to me meant that she also can't see herself.

Payne: She's delusional about love, but in a way that we all are.

Taylor: That's the only forgivable delusion in life.

Is the "Jennifer" song an allusion to '70s movies?

Payne: I just thought that when Tammy has flashbacks, it should be like a 1960s student film, 16mm, and by the way, I'll add that that was mostly shot by Jim. The 16mm stuff.

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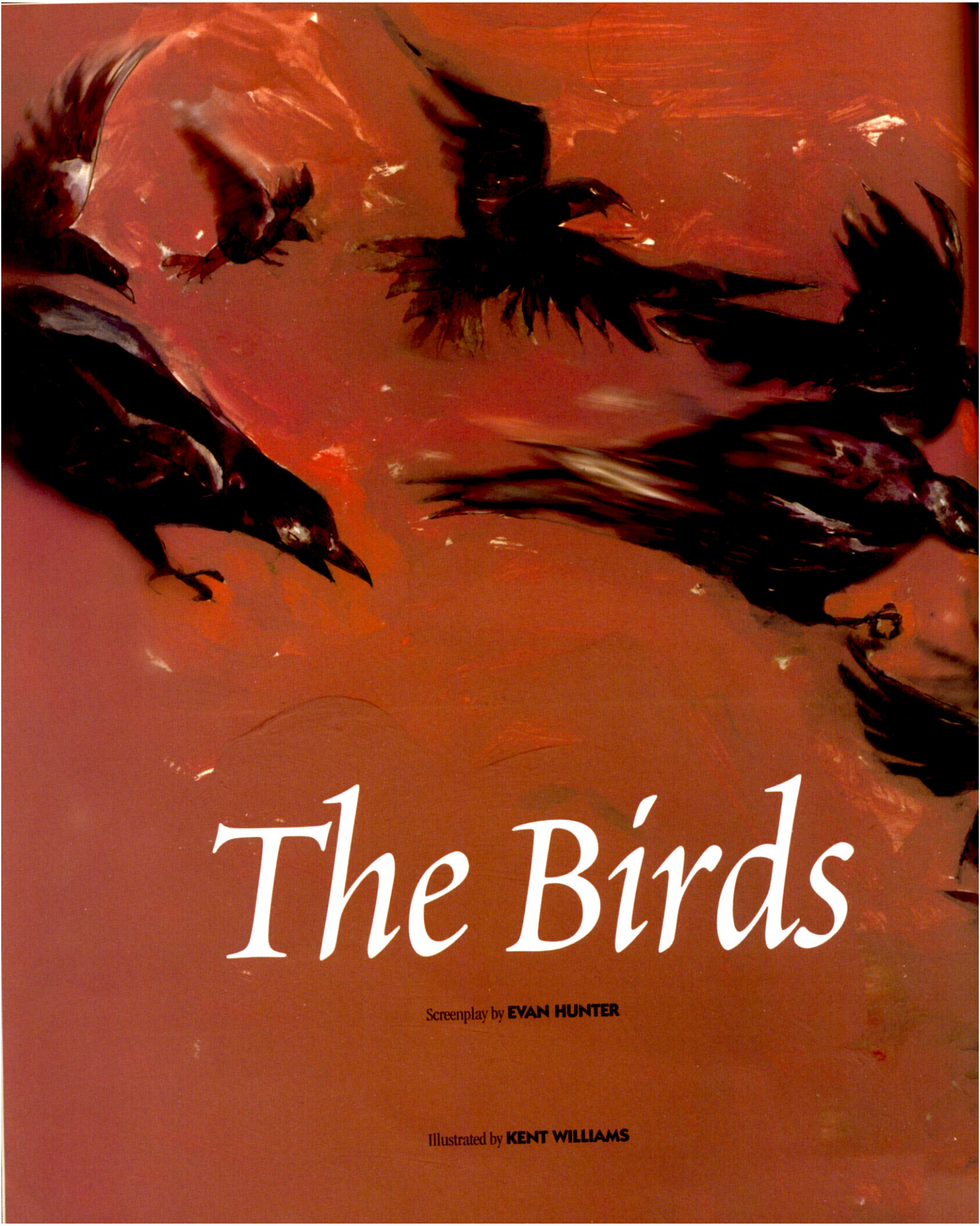

The Birds

Screenplay by **EVAN HUNTER**

Illustrated by **KENT WILLIAMS**

FADE IN:
EXT. GRANT STREET – SAN FRANCISCO – DAY
It is mid-afternoon, and there is a tempo and pace to the people walking, the doormen HOOTING for taxicabs, the policemen directing traffic. Pedestrians wait at street corner for the light to change. A man at the end of line of pedestrians is looking up at the sky. A woman next to him follows his gaze upward.

LONG SHOT – THE SKY
with hundreds of gulls in it, wheeling.

EXT. THE STREET CORNER
as the light changes and people begin to cross. In the crowd walking the other way, a man turns to look up at the wheeling gulls in the sky overhead. The CAMERA LOCATES:

MELANIE DANIELS
in the crowd of pedestrians, approaching Davidson's Pet Shop. She is a young woman in her mid-twenties, sleekly groomed, exquisitely dressed, though hatless. She walks with the quick sureness of the city dweller, purposefulness in her stride, a mischievous grin on her face. She continues toward the front door of the shop where MRS. MacGRUDER is standing and looking up at the sky with a peculiarly distressed expression. Mrs. MacGruder runs the bird department of the shop, and looks somewhat bird-like herself.

Melanie approaches, still looking back toward the street and skywards.

MELANIE Hello, Mrs. MacGruder, have you ever *seen* so many gulls?

MRS. MacGRUDER *(Glancing out toward the street)* Hello, Miss Daniels.

MELANIE What do you suppose it is?

INT. THE PET SHOP
as they ENTER. Mrs. MacGruder takes a last look at the sky, and then closes the door behind her. A puppy is BARKING O.S.

MRS. MacGRUDER *(Shaking her head)* There must be a storm at sea. That can drive them inland, you know, over the city.

They are climbing the short flight of steps into the bird department now. The BARKING of the dog SEGUES into the clamor of innumerable birds, TWEETING, TWITTERING, CAWING as Melanie and Mrs. MacGruder go to the counter at the far end. There is a circular cage in the center of the room, and the walls are lined with wire-mesh cages and smaller wooden cages so that the effect is one of being surrounded by birds, contained birds to be sure. The birds are quite beautiful, mostly exotic birds, small splashes of color behind the wire-mesh cages, larger bursts of brilliant hue on the parrots and parakeets in the bigger cages. As they walk:

MRS. MacGRUDER I was hoping you'd be a little late, Miss Daniels. *(Apologetically)* You see, he hasn't arrived yet.

MELANIE But you said three o'clock.

MRS. MacGRUDER I know. Oh, I know. *(She is more distressed now)* I've been calling all morning. Oh, you have no idea. Miss Daniels, they're *so* difficult to get, really they are. We get them from India, you know, when they're just little chicks, and then we have to . . .

MELANIE Well, this one won't be a chick, will he?

MRS. MacGRUDER Certainly not. Oh, no. Certainly not. This will be a full-grown myna bird. Full-grown.

MELANIE And he'll talk?

MRS. MacGRUDER Well, yes, he'll talk. Well, no, no. You'll have to *teach* him to talk.

MELANIE Yes.

MRS. MacGRUDER Yes. *(Pause)* Oh my, I suppose I should call them again. They said three o'clock. *(Pause)* Maybe it's the traffic. I'll call. Would you mind waiting?

MELANIE *(Judiciously)* I think maybe you'd better deliver him. Let me give you my address. *(She begins taking off her gloves)*

MRS. MacGRUDER *(Producing pencil and pad)* Oh. Oh, well, all right.

As Melanie starts writing:

MRS. MacGRUDER I'm *sure* they're on the way, though. Could I just call?

MELANIE *(With a resigned sigh)* Well, all right, but . . .

MRS. MacGRUDER It won't take a moment.

She scurries off behind the counter and out of sight. Melanie finishes writing her address, puts down the pencil, stands impatiently by the counter.

MRS. MacGRUDER *(O.S.)* Hello, this is Betty MacGruder at Davidson's. *(Pause; accusingly)* It's past three, you know. *(Pause)* Well, how long do you think . . . ? All right, would you check it, please? Yes, I'll wait.

Melanie sighs. Leaving her gloves and purse on the counter, she begins wandering around the shop. There is no menace in the birds surrounding her. They are active and beautiful as they dart behind the bars and mesh of

their cages. Offscreen, a puppy begins BARKING as the front door opens. Melanie looks up.

MITCH BRENNER closes the entrance door behind him and starts up the steps to the bird department. He is a handsome man, about 29 or 30, well-dressed, and carrying a felt hat. Melanie sees him, and then turns away to bend before the cage of strawberry finches. She pokes her finger through the mesh. The birds are startled into scarlet flight. Melanie and Mitch pass each other in the aisle. He gives a polite little nod, and she gives a polite little smile. But as he passes her, and unknown to her, he turns for a second look—and then vanishes behind the circular cage as he turns the corner. Melanie looks at her watch as she wanders around the other side of the cage and then comes face-to-face with Mitch again.

MITCH I wonder if you could help me.

MELANIE What?

MITCH *(Deliberately, and with a touch of hauteur)* I said I wonder if you could help me.

Melanie is a trifle annoyed by his manner at first. She is about to inform him, if you please, that she is not *a shopgirl. But then something rebellious flashes in her eyes and an idea comes to her.*

MELANIE *(Solicitously)* Yes, what were you looking for, sir?

MITCH Lovebirds.

MELANIE Lovebirds, sir?

MITCH Yes. I understand there are different varieties, is that true?

MELANIE Well . . . yes, sir, there are.

MITCH These are for my sister. It's her birthday, you see. She'll be ten and . . . well, frankly, I wouldn't want a pair of birds that were too demonstrative.

MELANIE I understand completely, sir.

MITCH At the same time, I wouldn't want birds that were aloof, either.

MELANIE *(Leading him around shop)* No, of course not.

MITCH Do you have a pair that are just friendly?

MELANIE I think so, sir. *(She looks around)* Now then, let me see.

MITCH *(At the finches)* Aren't these lovebirds?

MELANIE No, sir, those are . . . *red*birds.

MITCH The sign says strawberry finches.

MELANIE *(Airily)* Yes, we call them that, too. *(She moves away)* Ahhh, here we are. Lovebirds . . . *(And stops before a cage of canaries)*

MITCH Those are canaries, Miss. *(Pause)* Doesn't this make you feel awful?

MELANIE *(Baffled)* Doesn't *what* make me . . . ?

MITCH All these innocent little creatures caged up like this?

MELANIE Well, we can't just let them fly around the shop, you know.

MITCH I suppose not. Is there an ornithological reason for keeping them in separate cages?

MELANIE Oh, certainly. It's to protect the species.

MITCH I imagine that's very important. Especially during the moulting season.

MELANIE Yes, that's a particularly dangerous time.

MITCH Are they moulting now?

MELANIE Some of them are.

MITCH How can you tell?

MELANIE Well . . . they get a sort of hangdog expression.

CLOSE SHOT – A CAGED BIRD – MITCH'S POV
The bird is wearing a distinctively hangdog expression.

MITCH Yes, I see. *(Pause)* About those lovebirds, Miss . . .

MELANIE Are you sure you wouldn't like to see a canary instead? We have some very nice canaries this week.

MITCH All right. *(He smiles)*

She smiles back.

MITCH *(He waits)* All right, *may* I see one, please?

Melanie realizes she is expected to take one of the canaries out of the cage. She smiles feebly, glances toward the counter where she expects Mrs. MacGruder to reappear momentarily, and then takes a deep breath. She opens the door to the canary cage, and cautiously puts her hand into it.

MELANIE *(Feebly)* Here, birdie. Here, birdie, birdie.

One of the canaries suddenly flutters out of the cage and into the room. Melanie leaps back, startled.

MELANIE Oh! Ohhhhh!

The canary flies frantically about the room, Melanie and Mitch in pursuit. Mrs. MacGruder appears at the counter, finally confronted with the chaos she's been expecting all day.

MRS. MacGRUDER What is it? Oh! Oh my, one of the birds is loose!

She joins in the chase around the room. The bird flutters up to the ceiling, and then lands on the counter and

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watches them suspiciously.

MITCH Shhh! Shhhh!

He tiptoes up to the bird, hat in hand. Quickly, he covers the bird with his hat, then reaches under to grab it. Mitch has the canary in his hand.

MITCH There we are!

MRS. MacGRUDER Oh, good! Oh, wonderful!

Mitch carries the canary back to the cage. He opens the door.

MITCH *(Putting the canary in)* Back in your gilded cage, Melanie Daniels.

Melanie is startled.

MELANIE What did you say?

MITCH *(Savoring this)* I was merely drawing a parallel, Miss Daniels.

MELANIE But how . . . how do you know my name?

MITCH *(Secretly)* A little birdie told me. *(He smiles politely)* Good day, Miss Daniels. *(He bows to Mrs. MacGruder)* Madam. *(He starts out)*

MELANIE Hey, wait a minute!

She goes after him. Mitch turns, stops, smiles, enjoying her bafflement immensely. Melanie studies him. Then:

MELANIE I don't know you.

MITCH Ahhh, but *I* know *you*.

MELANIE How?

MITCH We met in court.

MELANIE We never met in court or anyplace else.

MITCH That's true. I'll rephrase it. I *saw* you in court.

MELANIE When?

MITCH Do you remember one of your practical jokes that resulted in the smashing of a plate-glass window?

MELANIE I didn't break that window!

MITCH No, but your little prank did. The judge should have put you behind bars!

MELANIE What are you? A policeman?

MITCH I simply believe in the law, Miss Daniels. I don't like violators. And I don't like practical jokers, either.

MELANIE What do you call your *lovebird* story if not a practical . . .

MITCH Ahhh, but I really do want those birds.

MELANIE You *knew* I didn't work here. You deliberately . . .

MITCH Right. I recognized you when I came in, and I thought I'd turn the tables. I thought you might like to know what it felt like to be on the *other* end of a gag. What do you think of that, Miss Daniels?

MELANIE I think you're a louse.

MITCH I am. *(He tips his hat)* Good day. *(To Mrs. MacGruder)* Madam. *(And he goes down the steps)*

MELANIE And I'm glad you didn't get your lovebirds!

MITCH *(Breezily as he goes out)* I'll find something else for her.

The door closes. The puppy begins BARKING.

MELANIE *(Angrily)* That . . . that . . . who *was* that?

MRS. MacGRUDER I have no idea.

Melanie seethes as she stares after him. Suddenly she gets an idea. She goes down the steps and to the front door of the shop. She looks through the glass. Mitch is getting into his car at the curb. She looks after the car as it pulls out.

CLOSE SHOT – THE LICENSE PLATE

Melanie sees the plate and gives a brief, determined, angry nod. She begins to repeat the numbers to herself as she turns. She comes up the steps again and walks toward the counter.

MELANIE Have you got a pencil?

MRS. MacGRUDER What? Oh, yes, certainly.

As Melanie begins writing:

MRS. MacGRUDER They said the myna bird would be here later this afternoon. If you'd care to come back . . .

MELANIE No, you'd better send him. Do you have any lovebirds?

MRS. MacGRUDER No, not in the shop. But I can order them for you.

MELANIE How soon?

MRS. MacGRUDER Well . . . well, how soon would you want them?

MELANIE Immediately.

MRS. MacGRUDER I might be able to have them by tomorrow morning. Would that be all right?

CLOSE SHOT – MELANIE
icy determination on her face.

MELANIE What *time* tomorrow morning?

FADE OUT

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE – DAY
Typewriters going, copy boys running, phones ringing as Melanie steps off the elevator and familiarly walks the length of the office to nods of personnel who obviously know her.

CHARLIE KAMEN at his desk, talking on the phone as Melanie approaches him.

CHARLIE How do you know they're getting a divorce? *(Pause)* Did *he* say they're getting divorced? *(Pause)* Did *she* say it? *(Pause)* Well, *who* said it? *(Listens)* Uh-huh. Uh-huh. *(To MELANIE)* Sit down. *(She sits on edge of desk)* Uh-huh. Okay. Okay, I'll run it. But it better be straight, Sam. The libel suits are already standing in line. *(Pause)* Yeah, thanks. Have a good weekend. *(He hangs up)* Why do I deal with liars and thieves?

MELANIE *(Shrugging)* Water seeks its own level.

CHARLIE Did you come to get nasty?

MELANIE No, I came for a favor.

CHARLIE Here we go again.

MELANIE It's a simple one.

CHARLIE They're always simple ones.

MELANIE *(Producing a slip of paper)* Find out who owns this license plate.

CHARLIE A story?

MELANIE Nope.

CHARLIE Another one of your gags?

MELANIE Nope.

CHARLIE So what's in it for me? *(Shrugs)* Not even a column item.

MELANIE That's right, Charlie. *(Pause)* Is he in?

CHARLIE He's in. And *busy*. You think we've got nothing to do around here but help you with every scatterbrained . . .

MELANIE *(Cheerfully)* I'll be with him, Charlie darling.

CHARLIE *(Picking up phone)* Charlie darling, my eye. Liars, thieves and practical jokers. *(Into phone)* Hello? Get me the Bureau of Motor Vehicles . . .

INT. PARKER DANIELS' OFFICE – INTERIOR – DAY
He is a well-dressed man in his late fifties, a little bald, a little paunchy, a little nearsighted. He is holding the front page of his afternoon edition at arm's length, squinting at it through his glasses when the door opens and Melanie enters.

DANIELS *(Without turning)* Don't bother knocking. Just barge right in.

MELANIE *(Smiling)* The usual old grouch.

DANIELS *(Nodding)* The usual old grouch.

He accepts her kiss.

DANIELS Don't get lipstick all over me. *(He rubs his face and studies the handkerchief)* You did. *(Pause)* Mother was trying to reach you.

MELANIE What about?

DANIELS She wouldn't tell me. Your mother always behaves as if all women belong to a secret sorority where death is the penalty for divulging anything to a mere male. *(Pause)* Through the veil of mystery, I managed to gather it was something about a riding habit. Did you order a riding habit?

MELANIE I did.

DANIELS As if there isn't enough trouble in the world.

MELANIE I enjoy riding.

DANIELS You enjoy too *many* things.

Melanie, sitting and assuming the posture of a small girl, hands clasped in lap, angelic look on face.

MELANIE Yes, Daddy dear, lecture me.

DANIELS No lectures. We're both too old for that. Besides, if your daughter enjoys riding, why shouldn't she ride? Or indeed order a riding habit when she has two dozen riding habits in her closet already. When I was a boy . . .

MELANIE Yes, Daddy?

DANIELS Yes, which was of course a millennium ago, but exciting times those, the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Washington striding through the streets . . .

MELANIE Yes, Daddy?

DANIELS When I was a boy, I had a broken-down two-wheeler and a pair of pants with a hole in the seat. My daughter has a Mercedes-Benz, her own horse and—I sometimes fear—a hole in her *head*.

MELANIE Tell me about Benjamin Franklin.

DANIELS He was a nice man. He knew all there was to know about this nutty world of ours.

MELANIE So do you. You're the smartest man in San Francisco.

DANIELS I know nothing about this world, Melanie. Look at it. *(He holds up the front page)* Riots in the Congo, Crisis in the U.N., Disaster in the Far East. What's the matter with people, Melanie? *(He nods)* I *know* what's the matter. They're all out riding horses, and nobody's minding the store. *(He sighs)* It

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goes by too fast for me. Yesterday, you were four years old. *(He puts down the paper)* Do you want to call your mother?

MELANIE No, I'll be going home from here.

DANIELS Where were you all afternoon?

MELANIE Shopping.

DANIELS Another riding habit?

MELANIE No.

DANIELS Another *horse*?

MELANIE No. Just some clothes. *(Pause)* And a bird.

DANIELS A bird, huh? *(Suspiciously)* What are you up to now?

MELANIE *(Slyly)* Nothing.

DANIELS Never lie to the smartest man in San Francisco.

MELANIE All right, when will Aunt Tessa be home?

DANIELS Next weekend. Why?

MELANIE That should give us enough time.

DANIELS Time for what?

MELANIE I bought her a homecoming present.

DANIELS A bird?

MELANIE Yes. A myna bird.

DANIELS That's what a woman of seventy needs, all right. A myna bird.

MELANIE *(Lightly)* I thought she might like it. I'm going to teach it to talk.

DANIELS There's nothing any myna bird can tell my sister.

MELANIE I had a phrase in mind.

DANIELS What?

Melanie whispers in his ear. He doesn't know whether to express surprise or amusement. He is certainly shocked at first, and then tempted to laugh, and then finally yields to laughter. On the crest of his outburst, there is a knock at the door.

DANIELS *(Still laughing)* Come in, come in.

Charlie enters carrying a pad.

CHARLIE I've got that information for you.

MELANIE Oh, good.

CHARLIE The car is registered to a Mitchell Brenner, right here in San Francisco.

MELANIE Where, Charlie?

CHARLIE Not too far. Just a few blocks off.

DANIELS What's this all about?

CHARLIE Another one of her practical jokes.

MELANIE No, Charlie. I told you it isn't. Not really. Well, it *is* in a way, but . . . *(She shrugs, grins)* Look, how often does a little girl have a birthday?

DANIELS *(Drily)* Once every year, I would imagine.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:
EXT. MELANIE'S SPORTS CAR
pulling up in front of Mitch's building, the top down. She glances up at the address, gets out of the car, comes around to the other side, and opens the door. The lovebirds, in a cage as Melanie reaches for them. Melanie turns from the car and goes into the building. She pauses in the lobby, studies the names alongside the bell buttons. Her gloved hand runs down the list of names slowly. It stops.

INSERT – THE CARD
her finger beside it.

BRENNER, M. #3B

HER GLOVED HAND
the forefinger extended as she runs it down over every bell button in one column, and then does the same for the next column. Melanie turns from the bells to the inner door of the lobby, grabbing the knob. A BUZZ SOUNDS. She opens the door. She comes through the door and into the lobby. She walks swiftly toward the elevator where a well-dressed MAN is standing waiting. Behind her, the inner door is BUZZING wildly with answering BUZZES. Melanie and the man stand waiting for the elevator, silently. Behind her, the BUZZING STOPS. The elevator doors open. The man smiles pleasantly and allows her to enter first. She does so with a small nod. The elevator doors close.

INT. ELEVATOR
The birds are CHIRPING wildly in their cage. The man and Melanie stand silently side by side. The man's eyes wander down to the birdcage. Melanie's eyes move toward him. Self-consciously, she stands with the cage of chattering birds. The man is dead-panned, unsmiling. The elevator stops. The doors begin to open.

INT. CORRIDOR
Melanie steps out of the elevator as the doors open. The man is right behind her. She begins looking for apartment 3B. The man is walking down the corridor beside her. She stops in front of the apartment, hesitates, hop-

ing the man will turn the corner in the corridor. He begins fumbling in his pocket for his key. He looks at Melanie. She smiles at him feebly. The man has spread change and an assortment of junk on the palm of his hand as he searches for his key. Impatiently, Melanie watches him. Making a decision, she puts the birdcage down before the door to apartment 3B, and then opens her purse.

Melanie's gloved hand reaches into the purse for a white envelope.

INSERT – THE FACE OF THE ENVELOPE
written there in Melanie's handwriting: MR. MITCHELL BRENNER

Melanie props the envelope against the cage, and then hurriedly goes down the hallway, intent on retreat.

MAN'S VOICE Miss . . . ?

She stops, distressed.

THE CORRIDOR
The man at one end, key in his hand; Melanie at the other end, near the elevator.

MAN Is that for Mitch Brenner?

MELANIE *(Curtly)* Yes.

MAN He's not home.

MELANIE That's all right.

She presses the button for the elevator.

MAN He won't be back until Monday. I mean, if those birds are for him . . .

MELANIE Monday?

MAN Yes. I don't think you should leave them in the hall, do you?

MELANIE *(Trapped)* Well, I . . .

The elevator door opens.

MELANIE Well, where did he go?

MAN Bodega Bay. He goes up there every weekend.

MELANIE Bodega Bay? Where's that?

MAN Up the coast. About sixty miles north of here.

MELANIE Sixty . . . *(Her face falls)* Oh.

MAN About an hour and a half on the freeway. Or two hours if you take the coast highway.

MELANIE Oh.

MAN I'd hold the birds for him, but I'm going away myself. Someone's got to feed them, I suppose.

MELANIE *(In utter despair now)* Yes. Yes, someone's got to feed them.

MAN *(Apologetically)* I'm awfully sorry.

He puts the key into his lock, opens the door, and goes inside. The door closes. Melanie is alone in the hallway, exasperated. She looks at the open elevator. She turns to look at the lovebirds in their cage outside the apartment door, chattering. Melanie surrenders with a gesture of resignation. She walks down the hall, picks up envelope and puts it in her purse, picks up the birdcage, carries it back to the elevator. The birds are cooing and chirping madly.

MELANIE Oh, shut up!

And she steps into the elevator.

DISSOLVE

EXT. MELANIE'S OPEN CAR
on the coast highway. It is a spectacularly beautiful day, with a cloudless blue sky. The montage of SHOTS that follow should alternate between the winding, twisting road and the ocean below, and CLOSE-UPS of Melanie driving with the caged birds on the seat beside her. The last shot should be a FULL SHOT of the car rounding a particularly sharp curve.

CLOSE SHOT – THE LOVEBIRDS
in the cage as the car rounds the bend. They lean to one side as the car turns, come up straight again as the car rounds the curve.

A CLUSTER OF BUILDINGS ahead, seen through the windshield as the car approaches. Town sign, seen ahead through the windshield.

INSERT – THE SIGN
BODEGA BAY
pop. 894

MELANIE
behind the wheel, leans forward slightly for a look at the town. DOCKS ON LEFT, seen through the windshield as Melanie slows her speed. STORES, on right of the road as Melanie enters the town. SLOW PAN matching car's cruise past BAKERY, SHOE REPAIR, CLEANERS, RADIO AND TELEVISION.

EXT. THE TIDES
past the gas station and beyond to the parking area and the docks, continuing Melanie's slow observation of the place.

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Melanie studies the town through the windshield. There is life in the town now, fishermen crossing the road, women with their hair in curlers, old ladies carrying shopping bags. This is Saturday morning, and the town – such as it is – is alive with its inhabitants. We see them from Melanie's POV as she scans the place for its post office. The car pulls in in front of the post office. Melanie opens the door and steps out. She is smartly dressed in a traveling suit and sweater. She looks up at the sign, and then walks quickly toward the front door.

INT. POST OFFICE
POSTAL CLERK behind cage as Melanie approaches it. He is busy filling out a form of some kind, affixing stamps to it, etc. He does not look up as she approaches.

MELANIE Good morning.

CLERK *(Without looking up)* Morning.

MELANIE I wonder if you could help me.

CLERK Try my best.

MELANIE I'm looking for a man named Mitchell Brenner.

CLERK Yep.

He is still busy with his form, still does not look up.

MELANIE Do you know him?

CLERK Yep.

MELANIE Where does he live?

CLERK Right here. Bodega Bay.

MELANIE Yes, but where?

CLERK Right across the bay there.

MELANIE Where?

It seems as if the clerk will not answer her. Suddenly, he leaves the window. We see Melanie through the bars, exasperated.

Melanie tries to peek through the bars to see where he's vanished. A door to the left of the window opens, and the clerk steps out. He walks a little distance as Melanie watches him, then he stops, turns and looks at her surprised, as if he'd expected her to be right behind him. He stands stock-still, looking at her, saying nothing. She understands then that he wants her to follow him, and she catches up, neither of them speaking. They go to the front door. He opens it, looks at her, then looks out across the town and the bay. He extends his arm and points.

CLERK See where I'm pointing?

MELANIE Yes?

EXT. THE BAY

CLERK See them two big trees across there?

MELANIE Yes?

CLERK And the white house right next to them?

MELANIE Yes?

CLERK That's where the Brenners live.

MELANIE The Brenners? Mr. and *Mrs.* Brenner?

CLERK Nope, just Lydia and the two kids.

MELANIE The two kids?

CLERK Yep. Mitch and the little girl.

MELANIE I see. How do I get down there?

CLERK Follow the road straight through town 'til it curves off on the left. That'll take you right around the bay to their front door.

MELANIE The front door. *(Pause)* Isn't there a back road I can take?

CLERK Nope. That's the road. Straight through town, stay on your left, right around the bay to the front door.

MELANIE You see, I want to surprise them.

CLERK Mmmm.

MELANIE I don't want to come right down the road, where they could see me.

CLERK Mmmmm.

MELANIE It's a surprise, you see.

CLERK Mmmmmm. *(Long pause)* 'Course, you could get yourself a boat, cut right across the bay with it. The Brenners got a little dock there you could tie up at. If that's what you wanted to do.

MELANIE Where would I get a boat?

CLERK Down at the dock by The Tides restaurant and motel.

MELANIE Well, thank you. That sounds like a good idea.

CLERK Yep.

He nods briefly and goes inside. Melanie looks out across the bay. She smiles. She reaches into her purse, for the envelope. She looks at the envelope, and then begins tapping it on the edge of her purse, thinking, reconsidering. Abruptly, she gets a new idea and turns back toward the post office.

INT. THE POST OFFICE
as Melanie approaches the clerk's window. He is still busy, still does not look up.

MELANIE I wonder if you could tell me . . .

CLERK Yep?

MELANIE The little girl's name.

CLERK The little Brenner girl?

MELANIE Yes.

CLERK Alice, I think. *(He turns, shouts to someone in the rear)* Harry, what's the little Brenner girl's name?

HARRY'S VOICE *(Shouting)* What?

CLERK *(Shouting)* The little Brenner girl.

HARRY'S VOICE *(Shouting)* Lois!

CLERK *(Shouting)* It's Alice, ain't it?

HARRY'S VOICE *(Shouting)* No, it's Lois!

CLERK *(To Melanie)* It's Alice.

MELANIE Are you sure?

CLERK Well, I ain't positive, if that's what you mean.

MELANIE I need her exact name, you see.

CLERK That case, I tell you what to do. You go straight through town 'til you see a little hotel on your left there. Not the motel, that's the other end of town. This is the *hotel* right over Brinkmeyer's general store. Now you take a right turn there, you got that?

MELANIE Yes?

CLERK Up top of the hill, you'll see the school and right close by, the church. You head for the school. Now just past the school, you'll see a little house with a red mailbox. That's where Annie Hayworth lives, she's the schoolteacher. You ask her about the little Brenner girl.

MELANIE Thank you.

CLERK Yep. *(Pause)* Could save yourself a lot of trouble. Her name's Alice for sure.

He goes inside. Melanie grins. She gets into the car and slams the door.

DISSOLVE

CLOSE SHOT – THE RED MAILBOX
with the name "Hayworth" on it. PULL BACK to reveal:

EXT. ANNIE HAYWORTH'S HOUSE – MELANIE
passing the mailbox and going up the walk to the front door. The house is a two-story frame with steps leading to the front door. There are white curtains in every window of the house, and a sign in the window to the left of the doorway advises ROOM TO LET. Melanie rings the doorbell, waiting. She RINGS the bell again.

ANNIE'S VOICE *(Shouting)* Yes? I'm out back! Who is it?

MELANIE Me!

ANNIE'S VOICE Come on around! Who's *me?*

Melanie comes down the steps and then goes around the house. The walk on the side of the house is lined with beautifully planted and cared-for flowers in riotous bloom.

ANNIE HAYWORTH is on her knees, digging in the garden at the back of the house as Melanie rounds the corner. She is a woman of thirty-two, tall, big-boned, with a strong, beautiful face. Her hair is disarrayed at the moment and she is dressed for the garden, wearing slacks and a loose-fitting sweater and earth-stained gloves. But there is about her a feeling of expansive comfort, rather than sloppiness. She looks up the moment Melanie comes into view. Behind her is a vividly beautiful garden. Throughout the following, we can HEAR BIRDS CHIRPING among the flowers and shrubs. Occasionally we see a small bird darting across the foliage. There is a peaceful, sheltered feeling to the garden, and a warmth about the woman who has created it.

MELANIE Miss Hayworth?

ANNIE Yes?

MELANIE I'm sorry to bother you, but . . .

Annie is puzzled by Melanie who, exquisitely dressed and groomed, seems singularly out of place in Bodega Bay. She studies her openly.

ANNIE Yes?

MELANIE The man at the post office sent me. He said you'd know the name of the little Brenner girl.

ANNIE Cathy?

MELANIE The one who lives in the white house across the bay?

ANNIE That's the one. Cathy Brenner.

MELANIE *(Smiling)* They seemed sure it was either Alice or Lois.

ANNIE Which is why the mail in this town never gets delivered to the right place. *(She takes out a package of cigarettes, offers one to Melanie)* Did you want to see Cathy about something?

Melanie takes a cigarette, hesitatingly

MELANIE Well . . . not exactly.

Annie studies her, thinking she understands.

ANNIE Are you a friend of Mitch's?

MELANIE No, not really.

There is an awkwardness here. Annie wants to know

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more. She puffs on the cigarette, smiles, tries a friendly approach.

ANNIE I've been wanting a cigarette for the past twenty minutes, but I couldn't convince myself to stop. This "tilling of the soil" can get a little compulsive, you know.

MELANIE It's a lovely garden.

ANNIE Thank you. It gives me something to do with my spare time. *(Pause)* There's a lot of spare time in Bodega Bay. *(Another pause)* Did you plan on staying long?

MELANIE No, just a few hours.

ANNIE You're leaving after you see Cathy?

MELANIE Well . . . something like that. *(Pause)* I'm sorry, I don't mean to sound so mysterious.

ANNIE Actually, it's none of my business.

There is a pause. Melanie, by her silence, affirms that it is *none of Annie's business.*

MELANIE *(Putting out cigarette)* I'd better get on my way. Thank you very much.

ANNIE Not at all.

They begin walking toward the car.

ANNIE *(Still curious)* Did you drive up from San Francisco?

MELANIE Yes.

ANNIE It's a nice drive. *(Pause)* Is that where you met Mitch?

MELANIE *(Hesitating, then:)* Yes.

ANNIE I guess that's where *everyone* meets him.

Melanie gets in behind the wheel. Annie's remark is not lost on her, and a quick look of sudden understanding crosses her face.

MELANIE Now *you* sound a bit mysterious, Miss Hayworth.

Annie leans over the seat.

ANNIE Do I? *(She shakes her head, smiles wistfully)* No, I'm an open book, I'm afraid. *(Pause)* Or maybe a *closed* one. *(She smiles again, sees the lovebirds)* Pretty. What are they?

MELANIE Lovebirds.

Taking this as a further indication of Melanie's relationship with Mitch:

ANNIE Mmmm. *(Pause)* Well, good luck, Miss Daniels.

MELANIE Thank you. *(She nods pleasantly, starts the car, pulls away)*

EXT. THE CAR – ANNIE'S POV
a cloud of dust behind it as it heads down toward the bay. Annie watches the car, a look of sad resignation on her face.

DISSOLVE

EXT. BRINKMEYER'S – MELANIE
coming out of Brinkmeyer's General Store, carrying a small paper bag, walking toward her car out front. The CAMERA FOLLOWS her as she gets in. She opens her purse, reaches in for the envelope bearing Mitch's name. We see her hands as she tears the envelope in two, and then picks up the paper bag, pulls out a birthday card. She reaches into her purse again for a fountain pen. She unscrews the cap, braces the card on her closed purse.

INSERT – THE CARD
Happy Birthday, the usual rhyming sentiments. The pen writes: To Cathy

DISSOLVE

EXT. THE TIDES – MELANIE'S CAR
pulling into the parking area behind The Tides, close to the docks. She gets out of the car and walks onto one of the docks, the birdcage in her hand.

Melanie and a fisherman discuss the rental of a boat. The fisherman nods. Melanie gets into outboard motorboat, the fisherman helping her.

CLOSE SHOT – THE LOVEBIRDS
in their cage, being handed down to Melanie from fisherman on dock.

THE BOAT pulls away from the dock, heading across the bay. We see the wide expanse of the bay as it heads on a direct course for the house on the other side.

The boat comes head-on toward the CAMERA, Melanie at the tiller. She cuts the motor. The boat drifts to a stop. The bay is silent except for the cry of the gulls.

EXT. THE BRENNER HOUSE – MELANIE'S POV
There is not a sign of activity as the boat drifts just a little closer. As Melanie watches, the front door opens and a woman comes out, walks to a red pickup truck, starts the engine. A little girl comes out of the house, goes to the truck, gets in. The woman shouts something to a man – Mitch Brenner, probably, though it is difficult to tell from this distance – and he comes over to the truck. The truck grinds into gear, goes around the turnabout, and heads down the road away from the farm, a huge cloud of dust behind it. The farm is still again. Mitch stands looking after the truck for a moment, and then begins walking up toward the barn in the distance.

Melanie watches, biting her lip. Mitch reaches the barn

and enters. Silence.

Melanie watches, waits. Not a sign of life.

Melanie picks up paddle from deck, begins to paddle in toward dock.

The boat edges in toward the dock. Closer, closer, Melanie puts down the paddle. The boat drifts in.

Melanie leaps ashore, tying up the boat, reaching down for the cage. She turns to look over her shoulder.

THE BARN
Its door closed, still no sign of Mitch.

Melanie makes her way carefully across the lawn, glancing toward the barn, carrying the birdcage.

MELANIE
at the front door of the house. She hesitates, looks toward the barn, excitement and anticipation on her face. She wets her lips.

CLOSE SHOT – HER HAND
twisting the doorknob.

INT. THE BRENNER HOUSE ENTRY
as the door opens. Melanie enters quickly, and closes the door behind her. She glances around for a moment, getting her bearings. The house is silent.

She enters the dining room. Hastily, she puts the cage on the dining room table, props the card up against it, then glances through the lace curtains on the dining room window.

THE BARN – THROUGH THE CURTAINS
as before.

EXT. THE BRENNER FRONT PORCH
as the front door opens and Melanie emerges. She glances once at the barn, and then breaks into a fast trot across the lawn and down to the dock, the CAMERA FOLLOWING. She gets into the boat and shoves it away from the dock. Quickly, she picks up one of the paddles lying athwart the seat.

Melanie paddles silently away from the dock. Her appreciation of her own joke is clearly written on her face – but there is still more to be anticipated. She must still see Mitch's reaction. As yet, the "reaction" seems most important to her. It is not until later that she realizes that Mitch is an important part of her entire mission. For now, she glances back over her shoulder, stops paddling, and moves to the stern of the boat where she stretches out almost flat, almost unseen, to observe the house and the outcome of her gag. The boat bobs gently on the placid water.

Melanie peers over the stern end of the boat, only the top of her head and her eyes showing.

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EXT. THE BRENNER HOUSE
All is still, all is silent. The barn door opens. Mitch comes out and begins crossing toward the house. He glances out over the bay, suspecting nothing, continues into the house.

Melanie waits excitedly.

THE BRENNER HOUSE
still and silent. Suddenly, the front door bursts open and Mitch runs out. He looks down the road. He looks off toward the beach. He looks out over the bay.

Melanie is unable to contain her glee.

Mitch runs to the front door, goes inside again.

Melanie sees this. A look of slight disappointment crosses her face. It is here that she realizes, not without consternation, that perhaps she was *hoping* to come face-to-face with Mitch again.

Melanie listlessly tugs at the cord to the outboard. She is still tugging when she hears the SOUND of the SCREEN DOOR CLATTERING shut. She turns immediately.

Mitch strides down to the dock. He stops on the dock edge, raises a pair of binoculars to his eyes, scans the bay.

Melanie grins, and then realizes he is looking through binoculars.

Melanie turns her back to the dock, tugs at the cord in a contorted position. The engine turns over. She sits and grabs the tiller. She looks back over her shoulder as the boat begins to move across the bay.

Mitch runs for his car. The car door slams. The engine starts. The car practically leaps out of the driveway.

Melanie triumphantly flicks her head.

EXT. THE BOAT AND THE CAR
The boat in the foreground, Melanie at the tiller; the car on the road in the background, paralleling the boat's course. The car and the boat, one going by the road, the other by water, both heading for the same place.

Melanie watches the car as it rounds a bend and seemingly goes out of sight.

Melanie thinks the car has lost her, or vice versa. A "damn it" expression crosses her face. She cranes back over her shoulder to scan the road, but the car is indeed gone.

EXT. THE BAY
the boat chugging across it, Melanie at the tiller.

DISSOLVE TO:
EXT. THE DOCK
as the boat approaches it. A distant figure is standing on the dock. Melanie leans forward for a better look, and then suddenly grins. The figure standing on it, hands on hips, is Mitch.

MELANIE
partially posing for Mitch, her hair blowing in the wind, her head tilted back, a smile on her face. A shadow suddenly crosses her face. She looks up.

FULL SHOT – A GULL
against the sky in beautiful soaring flight.

Melanie looks up, still smiling. The smile suddenly vanishes.

The gull swoops.

Melanie tries to cover her head with her hand as the gull hits her.

The gull swoops away.

MITCH *(As the boat comes closer)* Hey, are you all right?

The boat drifts in toward a second boat tied up at the dock. Mitch crosses the docked boat, leaps into Melanie's boat.

MITCH You're bleeding, do you know that?

MELANIE
a thin line of blood trickling from the cut on top of her head, down onto her forehead and cheek. She seems dazed. She shakes her head in answer to him, then touches the top of her head, looks at her bloody fingers, and nods weakly.

Mitch is concerned.

MITCH Come on, let's take care of that.

EXT. THE DOCK
as they climb into it. A FISHERMAN standing by looks at Melanie curiously.

FISHERMAN What happened, Mitch?

MITCH *(Over his shoulder)* A gull hit her.

FISHERMAN A *what?*

The CAMERA FOLLOWS them as they walk across the parking area behind The Tides, and to the closest office. Mitch tries the doorknob. The door is locked.

INSERT – SIGN ON DOOR

OUT TO LUNCH

Mitch tries door of next office. It, too, is locked.

MITCH Come on, we'd better go up to the restaurant.

They walk quickly up the slope to The Tides, establishing gas station across the road, the collection of stores opposite, the cars pulling in and out. Mitch opens the door for her, and they enter.

INT. THE TIDES
This is a small neighborhood restaurant, with the feeling of a local hangout. There are fishermen lounging at the bar and a teenage boy playing one of the pinball machines. Two ladies in housedresses, with their hair in curlers, are sitting at one of the booths, having coffee. The rear wall of the restaurant is almost all window, looking out over the bay and the parking area below. A television set over the bar is going. The shots and horsehoof beats of an old Western movie should be HEARD muted throughout following. DEKE CARTER, who owns the restaurant with his wife, alternates his attention between serving his customers and watching the Western. He looks up immediately when Mitch and Melanie enter.

THE BAR
Mitch and Melanie coming over to it.

MITCH Deke, have you got a first-aid kit back there?

DEKE *(Instantly alarmed)* What happened?

MITCH Young lady cut herself.

DEKE Shall I call the doctor?

MITCH *(Accepting the first-aid kit)* I don't think it's that serious. You want to sit up here?

Melanie climbs onto the stool.

DEKE You cut yourself outside, Miss?

MITCH Stop worrying, Deke. She was in a boat. *(He is rummaging around in the kit)*

DEKE I had a man trip and fall in the parking lot once, sued me before I could bat an eyelash.

MITCH I don't think Miss Daniels is going to sue anybody.

DEKE *(Doubtfully)* Well, you're the lawyer. *(He goes to the other end of the bar)*

Mitch unscrews cap from bottle of peroxide.

MELANIE What's that?

MITCH Just some peroxide. I want to clean the cut.

He pours peroxide onto a gauze pad and begins swab-

bing the cut. They are silent for several seconds. Then:

MELANIE So you're a lawyer.

MITCH That's right. What are you doing in Bodega Bay?

MELANIE Do you practice here?

MITCH No, San Francisco. What are you . . . ?

MELANIE What kind of law?

MITCH Criminal.

MELANIE Is that why you'd like to see everyone behind bars?

MITCH Not everyone, Miss Daniels.

MELANIE Only violators and practical jokers.

MITCH That's right.

MELANIE *(As he swabs cut)* Ouch!

MITCH I'm sorry. *(Pause)* What are you doing up here?

MELANIE Didn't you see the lovebirds?

MITCH You came all the way up here to bring me those birds?

MELANIE To bring your *sister* those birds. You said it was her birthday. Besides, I was coming up anyway.

MITCH What for?

MELANIE To see a friend of mine. *(She winces)* Will you please be careful?

MITCH I'm sorry. *(Pause)* Who's your friend?

MELANIE Why . . . *(She pauses, stymied)*

MITCH Yes?

MELANIE *(Blurting out the only name she knows)* Annie. Annie Hayworth.

MITCH Well, well, small world. Annie Hayworth.

MELANIE *(Realizing this was a mistake)* Yes.

MITCH How do you know Annie?

MELANIE *(The lie getting deeper)* We . . . we went to school together. College.

MITCH Did you! Imagine that! How long will you be staying?

MELANIE Just a few . . . just a day or two . . . the weekend.

MITCH I think we'll have to shave the hair. Deke, have you got a razor?

MELANIE *(Pulling away)* Oh, no you don't!

MITCH It's still bleeding. Here, try holding this on it for a while. *(He hands her a fresh bandage, then studies her)* So you came up to see Annie, huh?

MELANIE Yes.

MITCH I don't believe you. *(He grins)* I think you came up to see *me*.

MELANIE Why would I want to see *you*, of all people?

MITCH *(Shrugging)* I don't know. But it seems to me you must have gone to a lot of trouble to find out who I was, and where I lived and . . .

MELANIE It was no trouble at all. I simply went to my father's paper. Besides, I was coming up here anyway, I already told you . . .

MITCH *(Grinning)* You like me, huh?

MELANIE I *loathe* you. You have no manners. And you're arrogant and conceited and . . . I wrote you a letter about it, in fact, but I tore it up.

MITCH What did it say?

MELANIE None of your business. *(Pause)* Am I still bleeding?

MITCH Just a little. Keep the bandage on.

MELANIE I can't say I like your seagulls much either. I come all the way up here to . . .

MITCH But you were coming up anyway, remember?

MELANIE I was! And all I get for my pains is a . . . a . . . a hole in the head!

MITCH *(Grinning)* Right next to the one you already had.

MELANIE *(Angrily)* Look, Mr. Brenner . . .

LYDIA *(O.S.)* Mitch?

They turn toward the door.

LYDIA BRENNER, closing the door behind her, comes toward the bar. She is a woman in her late forties, attractive, wearing skirt, blouse, cardigan sweater, low heels. There is nothing agrarian-looking about her. She speaks with the quick tempo of the city dweller, and there is lively inquiry in her eyes.

LYDIA *(Puzzled)* I *thought* I saw your car. What are you doing in town?

MITCH *(Rising to greet her)* I had to acknowledge a delivery. *(He grins)* Mother, I'd like you to meet . . .

LYDIA A *what?*

MITCH Melanie Daniels. Melanie, my mother.

Lydia, her eyebrows raising ever so slightly, not in displeasure, but simply in enormous curiosity as she acknowledges the introduction.

LYDIA How do you do, Miss Daniels? *(To Mitch)* Acknowledge a *what?*

MITCH A delivery, Mother. Miss Daniels brought some birds

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from San Francisco.

LYDIA *(Thinking she understands. This is one of Mitch's San Francisco chippies)* Oh, I see.

MITCH For Cathy. For her birthday.

LYDIA I see.

MITCH Miss Daniels is staying for the weekend. In fact, I've already invited her to dinner tonight.

Melanie turns to him in surprise, beginning to shake her head.

MITCH After all, you did go to the trouble of bringing up those birds.

MELANIE *(O.S.)* I'm sorry. I couldn't possibly . . .

LYDIA You *did* say birds?

MITCH Yes, lovebirds. We couldn't let you . . .

LYDIA *(Understanding* completely *now)* Lovebirds, I see.

MITCH . . . get away without thanking you in some small way. After all, you haven't even *met* Cathy and you *are* staying for the weekend . . .

MELANIE Yes, but . . .

MITCH You *are*, aren't you?

MELANIE Certainly, but . . .

MITCH Then it's settled. What time is dinner, Mother?

LYDIA Seven o'clock, same as usual.

MITCH I'll pick you up, Miss Daniels. Where are you staying?

MELANIE With . . . with Annie, of course.

MITCH Of course, how stupid of me. A quarter to seven, will that be all right?

MELANIE Annie . . . Annie may have made other plans. I'll have to see. Besides, I can find my own way.

MITCH You're sure now? You won't hire a boat or anything?

MELANIE I'm sure.

MITCH Seven o'clock then.

MELANIE *Maybe.*

Mitch grins.

MITCH We'll be waiting.

DISSOLVE TO:
EXT. ANNIE HAYWORTH'S HOUSE
Melanie is standing on the front steps, a paper bag in her hands. She rings the doorbell. The ROOM TO LET sign is still in the window. The door suddenly opens.

ANNIE *(Surprised)* Oh, hi! *(Pause)* Did you find her all right?

MELANIE Yes, I did.

There is a long awkward pause. Annie smiles expectantly at Melanie. Melanie seems hesitant.

MELANIE I was wondering . . .

ANNIE Yes?

MELANIE That sign. *(Pause)* Do you think I could have the room for a single night?

ANNIE Well, I'd really hoped to rent it for . . .

MELANIE I *would* appreciate it. I've tried everywhere in town, and they're all full.

ANNIE *(After a long pause)* Sure, you can have it. *(Smiles)* Where's your bag? In the car?

Melanie holds up the paper bag. Annie looks at it and then smiles.

ANNIE It's utilitarian. I'll say that for it.

MELANIE *(Smiling)* I just picked up some things for the night at the general store. *(Pause)* You see, I hadn't planned on spending much time here.

ANNIE Yes, I know. Did something unexpectedly crop up?

There is a moment when both women look at each other . . . When Melanie answers, it is abrupt and a trifle cold—she is again telling Annie to mind her own business.

MELANIE Yes. *(Pause)* May I use your phone? I'd like to call home.

There is another moment where Annie appraises Melanie's attitude, and then accepts it. She suddenly smiles warmly.

ANNIE Why don't you come in then? I was just about to mix some martinis.

She is about to lead Melanie into the house when they both hear a sound overhead. They turn to look skyward.

LONG SHOT – A FLOCK OF LARGE BIRDS
flying in beautiful precise formation against the sky.

ANNIE *(Shaking her head)* Don't they *ever* stop migrating?

But Melanie is watching the sky and the birds with a curiously serious expression.

DISSOLVE

EXT. THE APPROACH ROAD
to the Brenner house. Melanie's car is driving along the shore. Behind her, the sky is stained with sunset. There are gulls on the bay, cawing into the silence. The car

pulls into the Brenner yard. Melanie reaches up for the rearview mirror, tilting it to examine her lipstick, touching the edge of her mouth with one hand. She gets out of the car, CAMERA FOLLOWING her to the house. She climbs the porch steps, knocks on the door. There is no answer. Puzzled, she begins walking back into the yard. In the distance, she sees Mitch, Lydia and CATHY coming from behind the chicken sheds. She raises her arms in greeting.

MELANIE *(Calling)* Hi!

Mitch and Cathy raise their arms.

CATHY *(Excitedly)* Hi! *(She breaks into a trot toward Melanie)*

Cathy approaches. She is a ten-year-old child, clear-eyed, bright, uninhibited, wearing dungarees and a T-shirt, her hair cropped close to her head. She hesitates for just a moment.

CATHY Miss Daniels?

MELANIE Yes?

And Cathy flings herself into Melanie's arms, almost knocking her off her feet, hugging her fiercely.

CATHY They're beautiful! They're *just* what I wanted! Is there a man and a woman? I can't tell which is which.

MELANIE Well, I suppose . . .

MITCH *(Coming up)* Hi. Annie had no plans, huh? I'm glad you came. Are you hungry?

MELANIE Famished.

MITCH Dinner's just about ready. *(Explaining)* We were out back looking at the chickens. Something seems to be wrong with them.

LYDIA *(Going toward house)* There's nothing wrong with those chickens, Mitch. I'm going to call Fred Brinkmeyer right now.

MITCH *(As they follow Lydia into house)* I don't know what good that'll do. *(Aside to Melanie)* Chickens won't eat.

EXT. THE BRENNER HOUSE
as they enter, CAMERA FOLLOWING them throughout into dining room, where Lydia dials the phone, talking to Mitch all along.

LYDIA He sold the feed to me, didn't he?

MITCH *Caveat emptor*, Mother.

LYDIA Whose side are you on?

MITCH I'm simply quoting the law.

LYDIA Never mind the law. Cathy, you can start serving the soup.

She has finished dialing now, is waiting while the phone RINGS.

LYDIA This won't take a minute, Miss Dan . . . *(Into phone)* Hello, Fred? This is Lydia Brenner. I didn't interrupt your dinner, did I? *(Pause)* Fred, that feed you sold me is no good. *(Pause)* The chicken feed. The three bags I bought this afternoon. *(Pause)* Well, it's just no good. The chickens won't eat it. *(Pause)* They're *always* hungry, Fred. I opened one of the sacks when I got home, and I poured it out for them, and they wouldn't touch it. Now you know chickens as well as I do, and when they won't eat, there's just something wrong with what they're being fed, that's all. *(Pause)* No, they're *not* fussy chickens. *(Pause)* Who? What's *he* got to do with it? *(Pause)* Fred, I don't care *how* much feed you sold him. My chickens . . . *(Pause)* He did? Dan Fawcett? *(Pause)* This afternoon? *(Pause)* Well, that only proves what I'm saying. The feed you sold us is . . . *(Pause)* Oh. Oh, I see. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Maybe I ought to go over to see him. You don't think there's something going around, do you? *(Pause)* No, never. *(Pause)* No, Fred. They don't seem sick at all. They just won't eat. *(Pause)* Mmmm. Mmmmm. Well, I'll try to get over to Dan's farm. Maybe he'll . . . mmmmm . . . mmmmm . . . all right, Fred, thanks. *(She hangs up, puzzled)*

INT. THE DINING ROOM
as Lydia comes to the table. Mitch and Melanie are sitting opposite each other in the center chairs. Cathy is serving the last bowl of soup.

LYDIA *(As she sits)* He got a call from Dan Fawcett a little while ago. *His* chickens won't eat either.

CATHY It's what you said, Mom. Mr. Brinkmeyer's feed is no good.

LYDIA *(Slowly)* No, Cathy. He sold Mr. Fawcett a different brand. *(Extremely worried)* You don't think they're getting sick, do you, Mitch? *(Her eyes are troubled as she picks up her napkin)* I'd hate to think they were getting sick.

DISSOLVE

INT. THE LIVING ROOM
The meal is over. The lovebirds in their hanging cage have been covered for the night. In the b.g. Mitch and Lydia are carrying the stacked dishes to the kitchen. In the f.g. Cathy and Melanie are by a small upright piano. Melanie is playing a Debussy arabesque (or a Scarlatti sonata); she picks up a cigarette from the ashtray now and again to take a puff.

CATHY I still don't understand how you knew I wanted lovebirds.

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MELANIE Your brother told me.

LYDIA *(As she goes into kitchen)* Then you *knew* Mitch in San Francisco, is that right?

MELANIE No, not exactly.

CATHY Mitch knows a lot of people in San Francisco. Of course, they're mostly hoods.

LYDIA *(From the kitchen)* Cathy!

CATHY Well, Mom, he's the first to admit it. *(To Melanie)* He spends half his day in the detention cells at the Halls of Justice.

LYDIA *(Coming from the kitchen)* In a democracy, Cathy, *everyone* is entitled to a fair trial. Your brother's practice . . .

CATHY Mom, please, I know all the democracy jazz. They're *still* hoods. *(To Melanie)* He's got a client now who shot his wife in the head six times. *Six* times, can you imagine it? *(She starts for the living room)* I mean, even twice would be overdoing it, don't you think?

MELANIE *(To Mitch as he carries loads of dishes out)* Why did he shoot her?

MITCH He was watching a ball game on television.

MELANIE What?

MITCH His wife changed the channel.

He goes into the kitchen. Melanie interrupts her playing to take another puff at her cigarette.

CATHY Is smoking fun?

MELANIE Oh, I suppose so.

CATHY Could I have a puff?

MELANIE I don't think your mother would like that.

CATHY Just a little one.

They both glance conspiratorially toward the kitchen. Quickly, Melanie extends the cigarette. Quickly, Cathy takes a small puff.

CATHY *(Delighted)* Why, it's just like air, isn't it? *(Determined)* When I grow up, I'm gonna smoke like a chimney! I'll be ten tomorrow, you know.

MELANIE I know.

CATHY Are you coming to my party?

MELANIE I don't think so. *(Seeing the child's face)* I have to get back to San Francisco.

CATHY Don't you like us?

MELANIE *(Touching her hair)* Darling, of course I do!

CATHY Don't you like Bodega Bay?

MELANIE I don't know yet.

CATHY Mitch likes it very much. He comes up every weekend, you know, even though he has his own apartment in the city. He says San Francisco is just an anthill at the foot of a bridge.

MELANIE *(Smiling)* I guess it does get a little hectic at times.

CATHY If you do decide to come, don't say I told you about it. It's supposed to be a surprise party.

Melanie laughs.

CATHY You see, they've got this whole complicated thing figured out where I'm going over to Michele's for the afternoon, and Michele's mother is going to say she has a headache and would I mind very much if she took me home. Then, when we get back here, all of the kids'll jump out! *(Pause)* Won't you come? Won't you *please* come?

Melanie shakes her head, glancing toward the kitchen.

MELANIE I don't think so, Cathy.

INT. THE KITCHEN
Mitch is helping Lydia as she loads the dishwasher.

LYDIA She's a charming girl, isn't she, Mitch?

MITCH Yes, very.

LYDIA And certainly pretty.

MITCH Yes.

LYDIA How long have you known her?

MITCH I told you. We met yesterday.

LYDIA In a bird shop.

MITCH Yes.

LYDIA She was selling birds.

MITCH No. I only led her into believing I believed she was . . . Mother, it's really very complicated.

LYDIA But she *did* buy the lovebirds and then brought them all the way . . .

MITCH Mother, where did you go to law school?

LYDIA *(Laughing)* Forgive me. I suppose I'm just naturally curious about a girl like that. *(Pause)* She's very rich, isn't she?

MITCH I suppose so. Her father owns the biggest newspaper in San Francisco.

LYDIA You'd think he could manage to keep her name out of print. She's *always* mentioned in the columns, Mitch.

MITCH I know, Mother.

LYDIA She *is* the one who jumped into that fountain in

Rome last summer, isn't she?

MITCH Yes, Mother.

LYDIA Perhaps I'm old-fashioned. *(Pause)* I know it was supposed to be very *warm* there, Mitch, but . . . well . . . actually . . . well, the newspaper said she was *naked*.

MITCH I know, mother.

LYDIA It's none of my business, of course, but when you bring a girl like that to . . .

MITCH Mother?

LYDIA *(Looking up)* Yes?

MITCH I think I can handle Melanie Daniels by myself.

LYDIA Well . . . *(She sighs)* So long as you know what you want, Mitch.

MITCH I know *exactly* what I want, Mother.

DISSOLVE

EXT. THE BRENNER LAWN – NIGHT
as Mitch and Melanie cross it to her car. The top of the car is up now. A wind is blowing off the water, and high fast clouds are scudding across the face of the moon.

MITCH You'll be able to find your way back, won't you?

MELANIE Oh, yes.

MITCH Will I be seeing you again?

MELANIE San Francisco's a long way from here.

MITCH I'm in San Francisco five days a week. With a lot of time on my hands. I'd like to see you. *(He grins)* Maybe we could go swimming or something. Mother tells me you like to swim.

MELANIE How does Mother know what I like to do?

MITCH I guess she and I read the same newspaper.

MELANIE Oh. That. Rome.

MITCH Mmmm. I like to swim. We might get along very . . .

MELANIE In case you're interested, I was *pushed* into that fountain.

MITCH Without any clothes on?

MELANIE With all my clothes on! The newspaper that ran that story happens to be a rival of my father's paper. Anything they said . . .

MITCH You were just a poor, innocent victim of circumstances, huh?

MELANIE I'm neither poor *nor* innocent, but the truth of that particular . . .

MITCH The truth is you were running around with a pretty wild crowd . . .

MELANIE Yes, but . . .

MITCH . . . who didn't much care for propriety or convention or . . .

MELANIE Yes.

MITCH . . . the opinion of others, and you went right along with them, isn't *that* the truth?

MELANIE Yes, that's the truth. But I was pushed into that fountain, and *that's* the truth, too.

MITCH Sure. Do you really know Annie Hayworth?

MELANIE No. *(Pause)* At least, I didn't until I came up here.

MITCH So you didn't go to school together?

MELANIE No.

MITCH And you didn't come up here to see her.

MELANIE No.

MITCH You were lying.

MELANIE Yes, I was lying.

MITCH Did you really write a letter to me? Or was that a lie, too?

MELANIE I wrote the letter.

MITCH What did it say?

MELANIE It said, "Dear Mr. Brenner, I think you need these lovebirds, after all. They may help your personality." That's what it said.

MITCH But you tore it up.

MELANIE Yes.

MITCH Why?

MELANIE Because it seemed stupid and foolish.

MITCH Like jumping into a fountain in Rome?

MELANIE I told you what happened in Rome!

MITCH Do you expect me to believe . . . ?

MELANIE I don't give a damn what you believe!

Angrily, she gets into the car and is about to slam the door when Mitch catches it in his hands.

MITCH I'd still like to see you.

MELANIE Why?

MITCH I think it could be fun.

Melanie pulls the door shut.

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MELANIE That might have been good enough in Rome last summer. But it's not good enough now.

MITCH It is for me.

MELANIE But not for me.

MITCH What *do* you want?

MELANIE *(Angrily sarcastic)* I thought you knew! I want to go through life laughing and beautiful and jumping into fountains naked! Good night!

The car pulls away. Mitch yanks his hands back from the door. He watches the car turn the bend. The road is empty now. No car. Only the long line of telephone poles and wires and . . . something strange on the wires. His attention is caught by the pole and wires.

CLOSE SHOT – THE WIRES
Hundreds of birds sitting on them.

Mitch stands and watches. A wind blows off the water. He shivers suddenly, turns up his collar, and heads for the house.

DISSOLVE

INT. ANNIE HAYWORTH'S HOUSE
Annie Hayworth in an easy chair, reading. Her hair is in curlers, and she is wearing a robe and smoking, absorbed in her book. She turns when she hears the front DOOR OPENING.

ANNIE Miss Daniels? Is that you?

MELANIE *(O.S.)* Yes . . .

Annie rises to greet her. As Melanie ENTERS the SHOT:

ANNIE Hi. *(Seeing her face)* Is something wrong? Is that cut beginning to bother you?

MELANIE *(Touching her head)* No, it's not the cut that's bothering me.

ANNIE *(Concerned)* Would you like some brandy?

MELANIE If you have some, I'd . . .

ANNIE I'll get it, sit down, Miss Daniels. Do you want a sweater or something? A quilt?

As Annie gets the brandy:

MELANIE No, thank you. *(Pause)* Won't you call me Melanie?

ANNIE All right. *(She smiles)*

MELANIE
sitting, tucking her legs up under her. She is disturbed by her conversation with Mitch, and, in fact, by the way this entire trip has worked out. Annie brings her the glass of brandy, and she takes it gratefully.

MELANIE Thank you.

ANNIE *(Sitting opposite her)* It gets a little chilly up here at night sometimes. Especially if you're over near the bay. *(Melanie nods and sips at the brandy. There is a long pause)* Well, how'd your evening go? *(Melanie shrugs)* Did you meet Lydia? *(Melanie nods)* Or would you rather I changed the subject?

MELANIE *(With a tired smile)* I think so.

ANNIE *(Nodding)* How do you like our little hamlet?

MELANIE I despise it.

ANNIE *(Laughing)* Well, I don't suppose it offers much to the casual visitor. Unless you're thrilled by a collection of shacks on a hillside. It takes a while to get used to.

MELANIE Where are *you* from originally, Annie?

ANNIE San Francisco.

MELANIE How'd you happen to come here?

ANNIE Oh, someone invited me up for the weekend a long time ago. *(There is an awkward pause. Annie shrugs.)* Look, I see no reason for being coy about this. It was Mitch Brenner.

Melanie nods.

ANNIE I guess you knew that anyway.

MELANIE I suspected as much.

ANNIE You needn't worry. It's over and done with. A long time ago.

MELANIE Annie—there's nothing between Mitch and me.

ANNIE Isn't there? *(She shrugs)* Maybe there isn't. Maybe there's never anything between Mitch and *any* girl.

MELANIE What do you mean?

ANNIE I think I'll have some of that, too. *(She pours brandy, drinks, sighs)* I was seeing quite a lot of him in San Francisco, you know. *(She smiles weakly)* And then, one weekend, he asked me up to meet Lydia.

MELANIE When was this?

ANNIE Four years ago. Of course, that was shortly after his father died. Things may be different now.

MELANIE Different?

ANNIE With Lydia. *(Pause)* Did she seem a trifle distant?

MELANIE *(Smiling)* A trifle.

ANNIE Then maybe it isn't different at all. You know, her attitude nearly drove me crazy. I simply couldn't understand

it. When I got back to San Francisco, I spent *days* trying to figure out just what I'd done to displease her.

MELANIE And what had you done?

ANNIE Nothing! I simply existed. So what was the answer? A jealous woman, right? A clinging possessive mother. *(She shakes her head)* Wrong. With all due respect to Oedipus, I don't think that was the case at all.

MELANIE Then what was it?

ANNIE Lydia *liked* me, you see. That was the strange part of it. In fact, now that I'm no longer a threat, we're very good friends.

MELANIE Then why did she object to you?

ANNIE Because she was afraid.

MELANIE Afraid you'd *take* Mitch?

ANNIE Afraid I'd *give* Mitch.

MELANIE I don't understand.

ANNIE Afraid of any woman who'd give Mitch the only thing Lydia *can* give him—love.

MELANIE Annie, *that* adds up to a jealous, possessive woman.

ANNIE No, I don't think so. She's not afraid of *losing* her son, you see. She's only afraid of being abandoned.

MELANIE Someone ought to tell her she'd be gaining a daughter.

ANNIE She already *has* a daughter.

MELANIE What about Mitch? Didn't he have anything to say about this?

ANNIE *(Apologetically)* I can understand his position. He went through a lot with Lydia after his father died. He didn't want to risk going through it all over again.

MELANIE I see.

ANNIE So it ended. Not immediately, of course. I went back to San Francisco, and I still saw Mitch every now and then . . . but we both knew it was finished.

MELANIE Then what are you doing here in Bodega Bay?

ANNIE You get straight to the point, don't you?

MELANIE I'm sorry. Forgive me.

ANNIE No, that's all right, I don't mind. I came up here for two reasons. To begin with, I was bored with my job in San Francisco. I was teaching at a private school there . . . well, you know, you probably went to one yourself.

MELANIE I did.

ANNIE Then you know. Little girls in brown beanies. Deadly. Here I have a life. I'll go into that classroom on Monday morning, and I'll look out at twenty-five upturned little faces, and each of them will be saying, "Yes, tell me. Yes, please give me what you have." *(Pause)* And I'll give them what I have. I haven't got very much, but I'll give them every ounce of it. To me, that's very important. It makes me want to stay alive for a long long time. *(She sighs)* That's the first reason.

This spread pages **68-77** of original script

MELANIE And the second?

ANNIE *(Simply)* I wanted to be near Mitch. *(Pause)* It was over, and I knew it but I wanted to be near him, anyway. *(She smiles)* You see, I still like him a hell of a lot. That's rare, I think. I don't want to lose his friendship . . . ever.

There is a moment of silence. Into the silence, the telephone shrills. Annie hesitates a moment, and then goes to answer it.

ANNIE Hello? Oh, hello. No, no, I wasn't asleep. What is it? *(Pause)* Yes, just a little while ago. Sure, hold on. *(She turns to Melanie)* It's Mitch. For you.

Melanie and Annie stare at each other across the room, Melanie hesitating.

ANNIE He's waiting.

Melanie rises and goes to the phone. The CAMERA FOLLOWS Annie to the wing chair in the foreground and stays on her throughout following, recording her reactions as Melanie talks to Mitch in the background. Annie is not devastated by this call, and yet there is a wistfulness to her expression as she realizes she may finally and irrevocably be losing Mitch to another girl.

MELANIE *(At phone, coolly)* Hello? Yes, this is Melanie. Fine, thank you. No, no trouble at all. I simply followed the road. It's a very bright night. *(Pause)* What? Oh. Well, there's no need to apologize. I can understand . . . *(Pause, she listens)* Well . . . *(She listens again)* That's very kind of you. No, I'm not angry. *(She listens)* I couldn't. I'm afraid I have to get back to San Francisco. *(Pause)* No, I wouldn't want to disappoint Cathy, but . . . *(Pause)* I see. *(She is warming)* I see. Well, if you really . . . *(Pause)* All right. Yes, I'll be there. *(Pause)* Good night, Mitch.

She hangs up and looks at Annie in embarrassment.

MELANIE He wants me to go to Cathy's party tomorrow afternoon. *(Pause)* I said I would.

ANNIE I'll be going, too, to help out. It should be fun, Melanie.

MELANIE It seems so pointless. *(She sighs)* I think I'll go to sleep. This has been a busy day. *(Picking up her paper bag)* My luggage. *(She smiles, takes out a flowered muumuu, holds it up to Annie)*

ANNIE Pretty. Did you get it at Brinkmeyer's?

Melanie nods and drapes the muumuu over her arm. She is silent for a moment, pensive. Then:

MELANIE Do you think I should go?

ANNIE That's up to you.

MELANIE It's really up to Lydia, isn't it?

ANNIE Never mind Lydia. Do you *want* to go?

MELANIE *(Firmly)* Yes.

ANNIE Then go.

The room is silent. Melanie nods, slowly, and then smiles.

MELANIE Thank you, Annie.

Suddenly, into the silence, comes a thump at the door, startling them both.

ANNIE *(Rising)* Who can that be at this hour? *(She walks to the door)* Who is it? *(No answer)* Is someone there?

Melanie goes to stand beside Annie. Puzzled, Annie unlocks the door, and then opens it. She looks out into the night. There is nothing but the sound of the wind.

ANNIE *(To the emptiness outside)* Is anyone there?

MELANIE *(Pointing to the ground)* Look.

CLOSE SHOT – A DEAD SEAGULL

ANNIE *(Sympathetically)* Ohhh. Oh, the poor thing. He probably lost his way in the dark.

Melanie stares at the dead bird as Annie stoops to pick it up. And then, slowly:

MELANIE But . . . it isn't dark, Annie. There's a full moon.

Annie, stooping, looks up at her. On their puzzlement and consternation:

FADE OUT

FADE IN:
EXT. A LONELY BUOY – MORNING
on the wide expanse of open bay. A gull is perched on it. The buoy bell rings with a dull, flat gong every now and then. The gull suddenly moves into flight.

THE GULL
soaring up against the sky.

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW
of the bay as the gull soars over it.

EXT. THE BRENNER HOUSE
as the gull swings lower and lower in descending spirals. We hear muffled voices below, getting clearer and clearer as the gull descends.

EXT. THE BRENNER DOCK
as the gull opens his wings to land on one of the dock pilings. Three other gulls are already sitting there. The voices we heard earlier are the voices of children, clear and distinct now.

EXT. THE BRENNER LAWN – GULL'S POV
The place is decorated with balloons strung from the house to various points on the lawn. The children, all little girls in bright party frocks, are clustered around a long folding table upon which is a birthday cake glowing with lighted candles. CATHY stands behind the cake, slightly embarrassed as the children, ANNIE, LYDIA, MITCH and MELANIE sing the birthday song.

ALL
You're ten years old now . . .
You're ten years old now . . .
You're ten years old, Cathy . . .
You're ten years old now!

Everyone bursts into applause and begins cheering.

LYDIA Now blow them out, Cathy.

MICHELE Make a wish first!

Cathy closes her eyes, makes a wish, and then blows out all the candles. Another cheer goes up. Cathy grins broadly and then picks up the cake knife to make the first cut.

MELANIE AND MITCH
holding martini glasses as they drift away from the table and begin walking toward the dunes. Behind them, Lydia is cutting the cake and Annie is handing it out to the little girls.

MELANIE I really shouldn't have anymore. I'm a little tipsy already.

MITCH I'm trying to get you to stay for dinner. We're going to have a lot of roast left over.

MELANIE I couldn't possibly. I have to get back.

MITCH *(With a shrug)* Cheers.

MELANIE Cheers. *(They drink)* What's in this? Nitroglycerin?

MITCH Why do you have to rush off? What's so important in San Francisco?

MELANIE Well . . . I have to get to work tomorrow morning, for one thing.

MITCH *(Surprised)* You have a job?

MELANIE *(Sipping at the martini)* I have *several* jobs.

MITCH What do you do?

MELANIE I do different things on different days.

MITCH Like what?

MELANIE *(Hesitatingly)* On Mondays and Wednesdays, I work for the Traveler's Aid. At the airport.

MITCH Helping travelers.

MELANIE Yes.

She hesitates for a moment, thinking. She has never really considered before what *she does with her time, and now that she is accounting for it, it sounds a little meaningless and unimportant.*

MELANIE And on Tuesdays, I take a course in General Semantics at Berkeley. That's not a job, of course. I just take it because . . .

MITCH What about Thursdays and Fridays?

MELANIE On Thursdays I have my meeting and lunch. *(Pause)* I'm chairman of a group that's sending a little Korean boy through school. We plan how to raise funds and . . . things like that. *(She shrugs)*

MITCH And Fridays? What do you do then?

MELANIE Nothing. *(She smiles)* I go to bird shops on Fridays.

MITCH I'm glad you do.

MELANIE Do you know what I was doing in that shop?

MITCH What?

MELANIE I have an aunt, you see. Aunt Tessa. She's seventy years old, and veddy prim and straitlaced. *(She does an imitation)* She's coming back from Europe at the end of the month, and I'm going to give her a myna bird that'll talk to her.

MITCH What'll it say?

MELANIE *(Facetiously)* You'll think me very bold, sir.

MITCH No, tell me.

She leans over and whispers in his ear. They both burst out laughing. But then suddenly, a very serious look comes onto Melanie's face.

MELANIE *(Serious, introspective)* That's silly, isn't it? Teaching a bird to shock my aunt. That's just silly and childish. *(Slight pause)* Maybe I ought to go join the other children.

Melanie moves abruptly away from him, and starts toward where the children have begun playing Blind Man's Bluff. Mitch stares after her for a moment, moved by this sudden glimpse of character, and then follows her down the dune. The children are all in a circle around the blindfolded Michele. Annie is supervising the game. She turns from the game, seeing Mitch and Melanie coming off the dune. Despite the green light she has given Melanie, there is a sadness in her eyes as she sees them together. It lasts a moment, fleeting, and then gone as her attention is once again captured by the game.

LONG SHOT – THE GAME – GULL'S POV
The four gulls, sitting on the dock, watching the game.

CLOSER ON THE GULLS
We see the gulls, showing eyes and beaks in a line.

THE GIRLS
shrieking as they run out of blindfolded Michele's way.

GIRL #1 Here I am, Michele!

CATHY *(Her face beaming, flushed)* No touching! No touching allowed!

Michele hurtles forward blindly, reaches out, and tags Cathy.

ANNIE She tagged you, Cathy! You're it, honey.

The little girls go to Annie. Michele takes off the blindfold, hands it to Annie, who in turn hands her back her glasses, which she puts on. Then Annie blindfolds Cathy.

ANNIE Can you see?

CATHY No.

ANNIE All right, then, here we go. *(She spins her)* Once! *(She spins her again)* Twice! *(She spins her again)* Three! Go get 'em, Cathy!

Cathy staggers forward, blindfolded, her arms outstretched. Melanie laughs. Cathy gropes, the other children taunting her. Cathy changes her tactics, stops dead, and then cautiously, cautiously reaches out in front of her at the air. A gull suddenly swoops at her, hitting her shoulder. She whirls.

CATHY No touching allowed!

All four gulls descend in that moment, striking her. She almost falls.

LYDIA Cathy!

The four gulls soar up against the sky, wheel, and then dive again.

Cathy rips off the blindfold and then covers her face with her hands as a gull dives.

The birds dive. The children are shrieking now and running from the birds. Mitch, with a broom, swings at one of the birds. Lydia runs away in fear as a bird comes at her.

GULL
in fluttering, hovering flight.

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CLOSE SHOT – THE BROOM SWINGING

Annie, swatting at a bird with her open hand, missing it narrowly.

CLOSE SHOT – WINGSPREAD
feathers falling, as Annie's blow comes close.

CLOSE SHOT – LYDIA'S EYES
wide in terror.

EXT. THE LAWN
The birds streak against the air. Mitch is swinging the broom. Balloons are falling and bursting. Annie is hitting out with her open hands. Melanie is a bit bewildered by the whole thing and stands by doing nothing, essentially useless. Lydia is shrieking as loudly as any of the little girls.

THE GULLS
suddenly soaring upward. The gulls against the sky, flying away in formation.

Mitch is about to swing with the broom again, but the birds are no longer there. A puzzled look crosses his face. He turns to Melanie.

MITCH Are you all right?

MELANIE Yes.

ANNIE *(Coming over)* That's the darnedest thing I've ever seen in my life.

LYDIA Are they gone?

MITCH They're gone, Mother.

EXT. THE LAWN
as the children begin drifting back toward the table and the cake. There is the curious feeling of lightning having struck very close by without having injured anyone. All that adrenaline has boiled up, and now it has no place to go.

LYDIA Well . . . well, is everyone all right?

GIRL #2 I think I got a little scratch, Mrs. Brenner.

GIRL #3 Did you see them? They were *hawks*!

GIRL #4 They were *bigger* than hawks!

ANNIE Children, they were only seagulls.

And then the meaning of what she has just said strikes her, and she remembers the bird hitting her door the night before.

ANNIE AND MELANIE
as Annie turns to look at her and they exchange a silent meaningful glance.

LYDIA They must have been after the cake.

They all turn toward it. The cake is intact, a neat pie-shaped wedge cut from it. Mitch's eyes narrow.

MITCH They didn't touch the cake, Mother.

ANNIE *(Trying to restore order)* Well, they're gone now, so . . . so let's . . . *(Pause)* Who was "it?" You were "it," weren't you, Cathy?

GIRL #2 Can I be "it," Miss Hayworth?

Annie and the children begin the game behind Melanie and Mitch.

MITCH You look a little shaken.

MELANIE I . . . I am. *(Pause)* Mitch, is . . . Mitch, this *isn't* usual, is it? The gull yesterday when I was in the boat, and the one last night at Annie's, and now . . .

MITCH Last night? What do you mean?

MELANIE A gull smashed into Annie's front door. *(Pause)* Mitch . . . what's happening?

MITCH *(Concerned)* I don't know, Melanie. *(Pause)* Look, do you have to go back to Annie's?

MELANIE No, I have my things in the car.

MITCH *(Gently)* Then stay for dinner, will you? Have something to eat before you start back. I'd feel a lot better.

Melanie nods, and then looks up at the sky. Suddenly she shudders.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. DINING ROOM
Mitch is slicing the leftover roast beef. He puts the meat onto bread, turning over his shoulder to call into the living room. The lovebirds in their cage are making a terrible racket.

MITCH Do you want some mustard on this?

MELANIE *(O.S.)* No, thank you.

CATHY *(Coming from kitchen)* Here's the coffee.

MITCH Take it into the living room, would you, hon?

CATHY *(Seeing the birds)* What's the matter with *them*?

Lydia turns from the table, where she is preparing a relish tray.

LYDIA What's the matter with *all* the birds?

She covers the cage. Under the cover, the birds are still tweeting madly. Lydia stares at the covered cage for a moment, and then sighs heavily.

LYDIA Well, let's eat, shall we? I'm sure Miss Daniels wants

to get on her way.

As they move into the living room.

CATHY I think you ought to stay the night, Melanie.

Lydia looks sharply at her daughter. Cathy pours coffee into the cups set on coffee table.

CATHY We've got an extra room upstairs and everything.

MITCH That road can be a bad one at night, Melanie. *(He picks up coffee cup, hands it to her)*

MELANIE I've still got an hour or so of daylight. And I thought I'd take the freeway back.

LYDIA *(Picking up a cup)* The freeway's well-lighted, isn't it, Mitch?

MITCH Yeah, but she'll be hitting all that traffic going back to San Francisco.

CATHY Did you put that cover on the cage, Mom?

LYDIA Yes, I did.

CATHY Just *listen* to them!

MITCH *(To Melanie)* Some cream?

MELANIE I'll get it.

She reaches over for the cream pitcher. Her eye is caught by something in the fireplace. She looks curiously.

A single swift is sitting on the hearth.

Melanie turns to Mitch.

MELANIE Mitch . . .

THE FIREPLACE
as dozens of swifts begin pouring from the opening.

Melanie, frightened now.

MELANIE *(Shouting it) Mitch!*

THE FIREPLACE
hundreds of birds pouring into the room. Lydia shrieks in terror, dropping her coffee cup.

The room is full of birds, swooping, diving, smashing against the walls. Mitch runs to the door, throws it open.

MITCH *(To the others)* Get outside! Run! *(He turns to Lydia)*

LYDIA
in terror, surrounded by birds.

MITCH *(O.S.)* Mother!

Mitch wrenches the cloth from the coffee table, cups, coffee pot, sugar bowl, creamer falling to the floor as he swings the cloth at the birds.

Cathy covers her face. Melanie reaches for small fireplace broom. Lydia shrieks as the birds dive at her face.

BIRDS
smashing against the windows, shattering panes.

Mitch realizes it's impossible to run. They must stay and fight.

MITCH *(Shouting)* Cathy, get some matches!

Cathy runs for the kitchen, birds swooping after her. Melanie swings the fireplace broom. Mitch rushes to the fireplace. He is almost knocked over by birds coming out of the opening. He stuffs paper under the logs already in place there. Lydia lets out a horrified scream. There are birds fluttering in her hair, caught there. Melanie swings the broom, covered with birds.

A PICTURE ON THE WALL
as a bird smashes into it.

Cathy runs into the room, covering her face with bent arm, rushing to Mitch with the box of matches. Mitch takes the matches. He lights one. A bird hits his arm. He drops the match. He lights another one.

THE MATCH
falling onto the paper in the fireplace. It flickers for a moment, then catches. Birds are still pouring out, past the paper beginning to catch.

ANOTHER WINDOWPANE
as a bird crashes into it.

Mitch rushes to Lydia, swinging the cloth at her head. She is in hysterics now, BABBLING. The SHRIEK of the birds is a wild cacophony.

THE FIRE
blazing.

A BIRD
swooping out of the fireplace, its wings aflame.

Fewer birds are in the air now, the single flaming bird flying blindly and in panic around the room.

THE CURTAINS
as the flaming bird lands on them. The curtains catch fire.

Melanie swings the broom wildly.

MELANIE Mitch! The curtains!

Mitch turns, sees, his eyes opening wide. He rips at the flaming curtain. He throws it to the floor, begins stamping on it.

CATHY It's working! The fire's working!

THE FIREPLACE
only the blazing fire. No more birds entering.

THE WINDOWS
birds smashing against the panes, leaving.

MELANIE
as she swats another bird.

ONE OF THE BROKEN WINDOWS
the birds leaving en masse now.

The room is a shambles. Windows broken, furniture knocked over, pictures askew, the floor covered with birds and broken glass.

In a corner of the room, Lydia crouches with her hands covering her face, sobbing. The burnt curtain is still smoldering. Mitch is covered with soot. Melanie puts down the broom wearily. The attack is over.

DISSOLVE TO:
CLOSE SHOT – A HAND
reaching down to pick up one of the dead birds.

INT. THE BRENNER HOUSE
AL MALONE, THE DEPUTY
a plain man with a limited intelligence, used to giving out speeding tickets or warning drunks. He holds the bird on the palm of his hand, looks at it steadily, nodding all the while.

MALONE That's a chimney swift, all right.

MITCH We know what it is, Al.

THE ROOM
still covered with the dead birds. Lydia is huddled in one of the easy chairs, still in shock.

MALONE Well, these birds *live* in chimneys, you know.

MITCH Not by the thousands.

MALONE No, I gotta admit this is peculiar. *(Pause)* Did you have a light burning or something?

MITCH No, it wasn't dark yet.

MALONE 'Cause sometimes birds are attracted by light, you know. *(Pause)* Sure is a peculiar thing.

MITCH What are we going to do about it, Al?

MALONE I don't think I get you, Mitch. Do about *what?*

MITCH Well . . . *(He feels a little foolish)* Well . . . these birds *attacked* us.

MALONE
slight disbelief on his face.

MALONE What's more likely, they got in the room and was just panicked, that's all.

MITCH *(Still a little hesitant)* All right, I grant you a bird'll panic in an enclosed room. But, they didn't just *get* in. They came in! Right down that chimney.

MALONE *(Trying to make sense of this)* My wife found a bird in the backseat of her car once. *(Shrugs)* Didn't know how he got in there. Had a broken leg, turned out. *(He shrugs again)*

MITCH These birds were . . .

MALONE What I'm trying to say, Mitch, is that these things happen sometimes, you know? Ain't much we can do about it. *(He shrugs)*

LYDIA Tell him about the party.

MITCH That's right. We had a party here this afternoon for Cathy. Her birthday.

MALONE Oh, yeah, yeah. *(He grins)* How old is she now?

MITCH Ten. In the middle of the party, some gulls came down at the children. And Miss Daniels was attacked by a gull just yesterday after . . .

MALONE *(Considering this)* Yeah. *(Thinking)* Were the kids bothering them or something? 'Cause sometimes they'll do that, you know. If you make any kind of disturbance near them, why they'll just come after you. I seen that plenty of times myself.

LYDIA The children were playing a game, Al. Those gulls attacked without . . .

MALONE Now, Lydia, "attack" is a pretty strong word, don't you think? I mean, birds just don't go around *attacking* people without no reason, you know what I mean? The kids just probably scared them, that's all.

LYDIA *These* birds *attacked!*

MALONE *(Nodding)* Well, what would you like me to do, Lydia? Put out a pick-up-and-hold on any suspicious birds in the area? *(He smiles)* Now, that'd be pretty silly, wouldn't it?

MITCH Does this room look silly?

MALONE No, you got quite a mess here, I'll admit that. *(Pause)* Maybe you oughta put some screening on top of your chimney. *(Pause)* Seems a little pointless, though.

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Freak accident like this wouldn't happen again in a million years. *(Pause)* You want some help cleaning up?

Mitch is exasperated.

MITCH I can handle it myself.

Lydia gives a small moan, and turns away in disgust at the sight of the birds.

MELANIE I'll put Cathy to bed.

MITCH Are you staying?

MELANIE I think I should, don't you?

Lydia, observing, makes no comment. Melanie puts her arm around Cathy's shoulders.

MELANIE I'll get my things from the car. Do you want to walk with me, Cathy?

Cathy and Melanie go out.

MALONE Well, if there's anything else I can do, Mitch . . .

MITCH Thanks, Al. We'll be all right.

MALONE Good night, Lydia.

No answer.

MALONE Sure is peculiar, I got to say that for it.

He exits.

The room is silent. Mitch looks across at Lydia who sits as still as stone in her chair. The door closes gently on a note of utter helplessness.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:
Melanie is sleeping. Sunlight is on her face. Her hair is loose. She wears no make-up.

LYDIA'S VOICE Mitch! Mitch!

Melanie stirs. Her eyes open.

LYDIA'S VOICE Mitch, I'm going to drop Cathy off now.

MITCH'S VOICE Okay.

LYDIA'S VOICE I'll probably drive over to the Fawcett farm. Do you need anything in town?

MITCH'S VOICE No.

Melanie lies in bed for a moment. Outside, we HEAR the SOUND of the pickup truck starting. She gets out of bed. She is wearing the flowered muumuu she bought on Saturday. She goes to the window and looks out.

EXT. THE YARD BELOW

Cathy, carrying her schoolbooks, runs to the pickup truck and climbs in. The truck moves out of the yard and down the road. It turns the bend, and moves out of sight.

MELANIE
turns from the window. She yawns and stretches, then goes to the bedroom door, CAMERA FOLLOWING. She opens the door.

MELANIE Mitch?

There is no answer.

MELANIE Mitch?

Melanie comes down the steps from the attic room. The house is empty. The CAMERA FOLLOWS her into the dining room, where she stops at the cage of lovebirds, bends down to them with a smile on her face. She smiles and pokes her fingers into the cage. The birds TWEET at her.

MELANIE *(Imitating them)* Chee-chee-chee-chee-chee.

Melanie goes into the kitchen. A pot of coffee is on the stove. She pours a cup, takes milk from the refrigerator, adds it to the coffee. She walks to the back door of the house.

EXT. BRENNER HOUSE – MELANIE
coming out of the house and into the garden, carrying the cup of coffee. It is a beautiful day. She sips at her coffee and then breathes deeply of the air. Her face is fresh, rested. There is a contentment in her which we have not seen before. She looks off toward the shore.

Mitch is on the shore, standing over a huge pile of dead birds with a rake in his hands. A thin column of smoke is climbing the sky. Melanie turns her attention away from Mitch and walks to the end of the garden toward the shore. A wind is blowing off the water, moving white puffs of clouds swiftly across the sky, whipping the full short skirt of the muumuu about her legs as she walks. She stands there silhouetted against the sky for a moment.

SLOW PAN
as Melanie scans the horizon. There isn't a bird anywhere in sight. The day is still and clear, but somehow ominous in its silence. Her gaze comes to rest on Mitch and the thin column of smoke again. In the distance, Mitch sees her and raises his arm in greeting. She waves back at him. He puts the rake down and begins walking toward the house. There is anticipation on her face now. She watches Mitch coming toward her, her eyes glowing. He stops, looks at her, and then turns toward the house. Melanie is at first surprised, and then puzzled.

The back screen DOOR CLATTERS shut offscreen. A small hurt look crosses her face. She turns away from the house and begins walking in the garden, sipping idly at her coffee. A screen DOOR CLATTERS again. She turns. Mitch is coming out of the house, from the front door, wearing a different shirt, buttoning it as he walks to her.

MITCH I wanted to change my shirt.

Melanie is uncomprehending.

MITCH It smelled of the fire.

MELANIE *(Nodding)* It's hard to believe anything at all happened yesterday, isn't it? It's so beautiful and still now. *(Pause; then sagely)* I think I've got it all figured out, by the way.

MITCH Really? Tell me about it.

MELANIE *(Secretively)* It's an uprising.

MITCH Of birds?

MELANIE Certainly, of birds.

Mitch grins.

MELANIE It all started several months ago with a peasant sparrow up in the hills, a malcontent. He went around telling all the other sparrows that human beings weren't fit to rule this planet, preaching wherever anyone would listen . . .

MITCH Growing a beard . . .

MELANIE *(Delighted)* Yes, of course, he *had* to have a beard! "Birds of the world, unite!" he kept saying, over and over . . .

MITCH So they united.

MELANIE Not at first. Oh yes, a few sparrows out for kicks . . .

MITCH Well, they'll go along with anything.

MELANIE Sure. But eventually, even the more serious-minded birds began to listen. Why should humans rule? they asked themselves.

MITCH Hear!

MELANIE Why *should* we submit ourselves to their domination?

MITCH Hear, hear!

MELANIE And all the while, that sparrow was getting in his little messages. Birds of the world, unite!

MITCH Take wing!

MELANIE You have nothing to lose but your feathers.

They both burst out laughing, then fall into silence, then laugh again and finally are silent. The garden is deathly still.

MITCH *(Attempting to be serious)* What it *was*, probably . . .

MELANIE Mmm?

MITCH They're probably hungry, that's all. This was a bad summer. They eat berries and . . . and nuts, you know, and the hills are all burned out, so they're probably searching for food wherever they can get it.

MELANIE With my little sparrow leading them.

She laughs, and Mitch joins her, but it is hollow this time. Like children who have told themselves a too-realistic horror story, they are becoming a little frightened.

MITCH It's so damn *quiet* out there.

MELANIE It was like that yesterday.

MITCH What do you mean?

MELANIE After the gulls attacked.

MITCH I hadn't thought of that. *(Pause)* And then the swifts came.

MELANIE It makes you feel as if they're . . . they're waiting or . . . resting . . . or . . .

MITCH *(Trying to make it light again)* No, they're having a meeting, Melanie. Your sparrow is standing on a soapbox and . . .

Melanie, her face dead serious.

MITCH . . . waving his little wings . . .

His voice trails. His face becomes serious, too. Again, the garden is silent.

MELANIE
her face set and grim, her eyes serious, her words coming slowly and with the chill of horror on them.

MELANIE They were angry, Mitch. They came out of that chimney in a fury. *(Pause)* I had the feeling they wanted each and every one of us *dead*.

He takes her in his arms suddenly, to comfort her. She goes to him longingly.

MITCH Melanie, Melanie . . .

MELANIE I'm frightened, Mitch.

MITCH No, no . . .

MELANIE I'm frightened and confused and I . . . I think I want to go back to San Francisco where there are buildings and . . . and concrete and . . .

MITCH Melanie . . .

MELANIE . . . everything I know.

She looks up at him suddenly.

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MELANIE Oh damn it, why did you have to walk into that shop?

They kiss suddenly and fiercely. On their kiss.

DISSOLVE

THE RED PICKUP TRUCK
Lydia at the wheel, pulling into the Fawcett farm, the name of the farm clearly visible on a painted arch over the gate. Lydia gets out of the truck and walks to the front door. She knocks. There is no answer.

LYDIA Dan?

She comes down off the steps, the CAMERA FOLLOWING, back a little away from the house.

LYDIA Dan?

There is no answer. She shades her eyes and looks out over the fields. She sees a FARMHAND on a tractor as she crosses to the fence and cups her hands to her mouth.

LYDIA *(Shouting)* Hi, there!

The farmhand stops the tractor and turns toward Lydia, shading his eyes.

LYDIA *(Shouting)* Is Mr. Fawcett home?

FARMHAND *(Shouting back)* I think so, ma'm. His missus is in Santa Cruz, but he ought to be here.

LYDIA Have you seen him this morning?

FARMHAND No, ma'm. I reckon he's in there, though.

LYDIA *(Shouting it)* Thank you!

Lydia crosses the barnyard again. There are several chickens scurrying about. She walks closer to them, sees an open bag of feed lying against the fence. She gets an idea. Lydia reaches into the bag of feed. She scatters some on the ground.

LYDIA Here, chick, chick, chick, chick. Here, chick, chick, chick.

A chicken struts up to the scattered grain.

Lydia watches him. He seems to be examining the feed. Then he turns away from it and struts off. Lydia gives a small, knowledgeable nod of her head. The chicken's reaction strengthens her determination to talk to Fawcett. She turns and approaches the front door again. She knocks. No answer.

LYDIA Dan?

She backs away from the house again. The barnyard is silent. In the distance, we can HEAR the SOUND of the tractor.

LYDIA Dan, are you home?

No answer.

Lydia is a little annoyed. She glances at the ground floor window closest to the door.

THE WINDOW
A small pane of glass is broken.

Lydia is puzzled. She goes to the front door, trying the knob. The door opens ahead of her as she pokes her head into the house.

LYDIA Dan?

The house is still and silent.

INT. THE ENTRY HALL
as Lydia comes in. We can see the living room off to the right, but it looks normal and untouched. Lydia turns to her left and looks down a long corridor. A door at the end of it is partially ajar, spilling artificial light into the corridor.

LYDIA Dan?

No answer.

Lydia is a little troubled. She seems to be deciding whether or not she should leave. A determined look comes over her face as she walks down the corridor slowly toward the open door at the opposite end. Outside the door, she pauses.

LYDIA Dan, are you in there?

No answer. Lydia puts out her hand, slowly begins shoving the door open. She comes into the room. Her eyes begin to take in the room.

SLOW PAN OF THE ROOM – LYDIA'S POV
Starting to the right of the doorway as she enters and continuing a little below eye level, the CAMERA PICKS OUT: a standing floor lamp, the shade dangling, but the light still burning; a picture hanging askew on the wall, its glass shattered; the window to the left of the picture, every pane of glass shattered; a dresser with two stuffed birds on its top; both birds have been badly damaged, the stuffing ripped out of them, the head of one hanging at a crooked near-decapitated angle; the window to the left of the dresser, all the panes shattered. The level of the CAMERA DESCENDS, and begins a SLOW PAN of the floor. IT PICKS OUT broken glass, continues its PAN to SHOW scattered feathers, continues its PAN to SHOW a broom, feathers caught in the straw, a single bedroom slipper, continues to SHOW a pair of legs in pajamas, one foot bare, the other slippered, and then immediately CUTS TO:

CLOSE SHOT – DAN FAWCETT
His face. Covered with blood, the eyes missing from their empty staring sockets. Immediately CUT TO:

LYDIA
a terrified scream erupting from her mouth.

Lydia turns and runs for the door. The CAMERA FOLLOWS her into an unbroken headlong flight, the screaming continuing as if she is incapable of stopping it, as she stumbles, runs, trips her way down the corridor and bursts out of the house, still screaming, into the pickup truck. The engine starts, she backs the truck out at breakneck speed and hits the highway, CAMERA FOLLOWING.

LYDIA
at the wheel, her face stamped with terror, her eyes wide.

THE TRUCK
at breakneck speed, negotiating the severe curves on the highway. It almost hits a small car coming from the opposite direction, swerves, screeches around the curve. Lydia behind the wheel, unmindful of anything but flight.

THE ROAD – LYDIA'S POV
through the windshield, blurring past. She turns the bend leading to the house. For an instant, through the windshield, there is a quick glimpse of Melanie and Mitch in embrace in the garden. Then the tires shriek, and the truck turns and barrels into the front yard. Mitch is alarmed as he runs out of the garden and toward the truck just as it jerks to a stop. He pulls open the door opposite Lydia.

MITCH *(Alarmed)* What is it?

Lydia is slumped on the wheel of the car, her head in her arms, sobbing. On her sobs . . .

DISSOLVE

MELANIE
at the kitchen stove, taking a kettle of tea from the burner. She pours it in a cup, puts the cup on a tray already set with sugar and creamer. She looks up as Mitch comes into the kitchen.

MITCH That was Al on the phone. He wants me to meet him out at the Fawcett place. Says some detectives from Santa Rosa'll be there in a little while. *(Pause)* Will you be all right here?

MELANIE Yes. I was just taking her in some tea.

He goes to her, puts his arms around her from behind, kisses her hair. But she turns in his arms suddenly and clings to him fiercely, and then buries her head in his shoulder.

MELANIE Be careful. Please.

She walks him to the door. At the door, they kiss—a long, full kiss.

THE KITCHEN
as Mitch goes out. Melanie looks after him for a moment, then picks up the tray. Outside, we HEAR the SOUND of his car starting. The CAMERA FOLLOWS Melanie out of the kitchen, through the dining room, and to one of the bedroom doors on the other side of the house. Gently, she KNOCKS.

LYDIA *(O.S.)* Mitch?

THE BEDROOM
This is Lydia's room, and cluttered with the mementos of a life no longer valid. There are photographs of her dead husband, souvenirs of trips taken together, bric-a-brac of Mitch's childhood. Under it all, there is a distinct femininity. She sits up in bed as Melanie enters, bearing the tray.

MELANIE No, it's me, Mrs. Brenner. I thought you might like some tea.

LYDIA Oh, thank you.

There is a long silence as Melanie puts the tray on the bed, arranges the pillows behind Lydia.

LYDIA Where's Mitch?

MELANIE Al Malone wanted him out at the Fawcett farm.

LYDIA Why? Didn't Al believe my story?

MELANIE He was calling *from* the farm, Mrs. Brenner.

LYDIA Then he saw.

MELANIE He must have. He sent for the Santa Rosa police.

LYDIA What good will they do?

She sips at the tea. There is a long awkward pause. Melanie walks to the window and looks out over the bay.

LYDIA Do you think Cathy's all right?

MELANIE What?

LYDIA Cathy. At the school.

MELANIE
at the window, her face turned away from Lydia. Her expression clearly shows that she doesn't know whether Cathy *is* all right. But when she turns to Lydia, there is a comforting smile on her face, and her voice is soothing.

MELANIE Yes, I'm sure she's fine.

LYDIA Do I sound foolish to you?

MELANIE No.

LYDIA I keep seeing Dan Fawcett's face. *(She shudders)* There's so much glass at the school. *(Pause)* All the windows were broken. In Dan's bedroom. All the windows.

MELANIE Try not to think of that, Mrs. Brenner.

LYDIA I wish I were a stronger person.

There is a long awkward silence. She sips at her tea reflectively.

LYDIA I lost my husband six years ago, you know. *(Pause)* It's odd how you depend on someone for strength, and then suddenly all the strength is gone, and you're alone. *(Pause)* I'd love to relax some time. I'd love to be able to sleep. *(Pause; the worried look again)* Do you think Cathy's all right?

MELANIE Annie's with her. She'll be all right.

LYDIA I'm not this way, you know. Not usually. I don't fuss and fret over my children. *(Pause)* When Frank died . . . *(Pause)* You see, he knew the children, he really *knew* them. He had the knack of being able to enter into their world, of becoming a part of them. That's a rare talent.

MELANIE Yes.

LYDIA I wish I could be that way.

There is another silence. A curious thing is happening in this room. Lydia, for perhaps the first time since her husband's death, is discussing it with another person. Curiously, the person is Melanie.

LYDIA *(Honestly and simply)* I miss him. *(Pause)* You know, sometimes I wake up in the morning, and I think "I have to make Frank's breakfast," and I . . . I get up and there's a . . . a very good reason for getting out of bed until . . . until, of course, I remember. *(Pause)* I miss talking to him. *(Pause)* Cathy's a child, you know, and Mitch . . . *(She shrugs a little sadly)* . . . Mitch has his own life. *(Pause)* I'm glad he stayed here today. I feel safer with him here. *(She sighs deeply)*

MELANIE Would you like to rest now, Mrs. Brenner?

LYDIA No. No . . . don't go yet. *(Pause)* I feel as if I . . . I don't understand you. And I want so much to understand.

MELANIE Why, Mrs. Brenner?

LYDIA Because my son . . . *(Pause)* My son seems to be fond of you. *(Pause)* And I . . . *(Pause)* I'm not quite sure how I feel about it. I really don't know if I . . . *like* you or not.

MELANIE Is that so important, Mrs. Brenner? Your liking me?

LYDIA Yes, I think so. My son is important to me. I *want* to like any girl he chooses.

MELANIE And if you don't?

LYDIA *(With a faint smile)* Then I don't suppose it'll matter much to anyone but me.

MELANIE I think it might also matter to Mitch.

LYDIA *(Shaking her head)* Mitch has always done *exactly* what he wanted to. *(Pause)* I'm not complaining. That's the mark of a man. But . . . *(Pause)* You see, I . . . I wouldn't want to be . . . be left alone. I don't think I could bear being left alone. I . . . forgive me. This business with the birds has me upset. I . . . don't know what I'd do if Mitch weren't here.

MELANIE *(Going to the bed, adjusting the pillow)* Why don't you try to sleep now, Mrs. Brenner?

LYDIA *(Sighing)* I wish I were stronger. *(She pauses and looks toward the window)* Do you think she's all right? Do you think she's safe at the school?

MELANIE Would you like me to go for her?

LYDIA I couldn't ask you to.

MELANIE I don't mind, really.

LYDIA Would you? I'd feel so much better.

MELANIE I'll just clean up here, and then dress.

She picks up the tray and starts for the door.

LYDIA Melanie?

At the door, Melanie turns.

LYDIA *(Gently)* Thank you for the tea.

DISSOLVE

EXT. THE BODEGA BAY SCHOOL
a flag flying above it, a sign announcing it as Melanie pulls up in her open convertible. Inside the school, we HEAR the CHILDREN SINGING.

CHILDREN I married my wife in the month of June. Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, Mo, mo, mo!

Melanie smiles as she gets out of the car and heads for the school.

CHILDREN *(O.S.)* I carried her off in a silver spoon. Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, hey bombosity, knickety-knackety, retro-quo-quality, willoby-wallaby, Mo, mo, mo!

The CAMERA FOLLOWS Melanie into the school and down the corridor. The children's VOICES are louder now.

CHILDREN *(O.S.)* She combed her hair but once a year. Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, Mo, mo, mo! With every rake, she shed a tear. Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, hey bombosity, knickety-knackety, retro-quo-quality, willoby-wallaby, Mo, mo, mo!

Melanie is at the door to Annie's room now. She raps on the glass.

ANNIE – MELANIE'S POV
leading the children in song. She turns at the SOUND. Melanie wiggles her fingers. Annie, in pantomime, tells her she'll be finished in a few minutes, motions for her to wait in the play-yard outside. Melanie turns and starts down the corridor again. She comes out of the school and goes around the building, CAMERA FOLLOWING. Inside, the children are still singing.

CHILDREN *(O.S.)* She swept the floor but once a year. Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, Mo, mo, mo! She swore her broom was much too dear. Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, hey bombosity, knickety-knackety, retro-quo-quality, willoby-wallaby, Mo, mo, mo!

The CAMERA FOLLOWS Melanie into the play-yard. It is a small yard, fenced in with a white picket fence. There are swings, and monkey bars, and see-saws, but the equipment is idle and empty. Melanie sits on a bench facing the school building, her back to the equipment. The wall she faces is composed almost entirely of windows; small-paned windows similar to the ones at the Fawcett farm. To the right of the windows is a small door, its top glass-paned, like the windows. Through the windows, we can see the children singing and Annie leading them. Melanie lights a cigarette and listens.

CHILDREN She churned the butter in Dad's old boot. Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, Mo, mo, mo! And for a dasher she used her foot. Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, hey bombosity, knickety-knackety, retro-quo-quality, willoby-wallaby, Mo, mo, mo!

Behind Melanie, a single black crow suddenly lands on the monkey bars and sits silently.

CHILDREN The butter came out a grizzle-y grey. Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, Mo, mo, mo! The cheese took legs and ran away. Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, hey bombosity, knickety-knackety, retro-quo-quality, willoby-wallaby, Mo, mo, mo!

Behind Melanie, a half-dozen crows land on swings and sit there silently. Melanie listens to the children singing. A smile is on her face. She smokes leisurely.

CHILDREN *(O.S.)* I bought my wife a horse one day. Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, Mo, mo, mo! She let the critter get away. Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, hey bombosity, knickety-knackety, retro-quo-quality, willoby-wallaby, Mo, mo, mo!

Melanie takes the last drag on her cigarette and then turns to put it out. Her eyes widen.

FULL SHOT – THE PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT
covered with hundreds of crows.

Melanie rises, alarmed. She begins backing away from the crows, toward the fence. She spots a stick on the ground, picks it up, and runs it along the pickets.

CLOSE SHOT – THE CROWS
heads and eyes, full malevolence there, and patience.

CHILDREN *(O.S.)* I asked my wife to wash the floor. Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, Mo, mo, mo! She gave me my hat and showed me the door! Ristle-tee, rostle-tee, hey bombosity, knickety-knackety, retro-quo-quality *(The song slows; it is near the end)*, willoby-wallaby, Mmmmo, mmmmoo, MO!

The children have stopped singing. The yard is silent now. Melanie picks up a stone and throws it at the crows.

CLOSE SHOT – THE CROWS
unflinching, sitting, waiting. Melanie picks up another stone.

ANNIE *(O.S.)* All right, children. Now please put your books in your desks and bring the songsheets to the front of the room. No one's going out to play until I have all the songsheets.

Melanie HEARS this and realizes the children are coming outside! She rushes past the waiting crows and runs around the side of the building.

THE INTERIOR CORRIDOR
Melanie in headlong flight toward Annie's room.

THE ROOM
Annie is lining the children up near the door leading to the play-yard.

ANNIE We're not going outside until we quiet down. Ralph? Do you hear me?

The children mutter for a moment, and then are still.

ANNIE All right now.

She begins opening the play-yard door. Suddenly, the corridor door bursts open and Melanie rushes wildly into the room. She goes directly to Annie, shoves her out of the way, and slams shut the play-yard door.

ANNIE Wh . . . ?

MELANIE Outside.

LONG SHOT – THE CROWS – THROUGH THE WINDOWS

MELANIE We've got to get the children out of here. All this glass . . .

Annie gives a quick nod, understanding immediately. Through the windows, we can see the waiting crows. One moves restlessly into flight, then settles on the equipment again.

This spread pages **116-125** of original script

ANNIE Quiet down, children! Quiet down!

The children modulate into silence.

ANNIE Miss Daniels wants to see how we conduct ourselves during a fire drill. I'd like you to . . .

CHILDREN *(Grumbling in unison)* A fire drill? This is our play period, Miss Hayworth! Gee whiz! Etc.

ANNIE I'd like you to show her how quiet and obedient you can be.

The children again fall silent.

ANNIE We're going to go out of the school now. Those of you who live nearby can go directly home. I want the rest of you to go down the hill, all the way to the hotel. Do you understand?

CHILDREN All the way down the hill? Gee, Miss Hayworth, we never . . . Home? Why do we . . . ?

ANNIE *(Shushing them)* I want you to go as quietly as you can, not a sound, until I tell you to run. And then I want you to run as fast as you can. Does everyone understand? *(Pause; silence)* All right. John, would you lead the class, please?

The children walk two-by-two to the corridor door. John opens it, and they begin filing out. Melanie turns to look at the play-yard.

A SINGLE CROW
fluttering at the window, almost in exploration. He hangs there for a moment, then wings back to the playground equipment.

MELANIE *(Whispering)* *Hurry*!

The corridor, as the children come out of the room and walk silently down it. The door to the other classroom opens and a man teacher looks into the corridor curiously. Annie stops beside him.

ANNIE We're taking them out of the school. Have your class follow us.

TEACHER What? We're in the middle of . . .

ANNIE *(Tightly)* Just *follow* us!

THE PLAYGROUND
The crows are all over the equipment. They sit there silently, waiting. Their heads turn restlessly, their wings flutter every now and then. The CAMERA STAYS with them. There is not a sound. And then, suddenly, from far off down the road, we HEAR the SOUND of the children RUNNING. There is a tiny pause, and then – immediately and together – the crows beat their wings into flight.

THE SCHOOL BUILDING
as the crows come over the roof, suddenly blackening the sky.

MELANIE *(Shouting)* Run! Run!

THE ROAD
as the crows strike at the children. The children are in desperate flight now, some running headlong down the hill to the main road, others ducking behind trees and bushes. The crows are everywhere, zooming, pecking, soaring upward again, dropping again.

Michele looks over her shoulder as she runs.

CATHY Hurry, Michele!

THE ROAD
Crows in the air, Michele running. She suddenly stumbles and falls.

Michele hits the ground, her glasses falling off her face.

Her glasses hit the ground, shattering.

Cathy turns, her eyes wide.

CATHY Michele!

Cathy turns back to run to Michele. The crows strike, covering Michele's back. As Cathy approaches her, more crows descend, hitting her. She tries to fend them off. Michele is SCREAMING now, covered from head to foot with the black birds.

Melanie sees them. She runs toward the girls, taking off her suit jacket as she runs. She begins swinging it at the crows. They flutter into the air.

CROWS
thrusting beaks.

Melanie reaches down for Michele. She drags her to her feet. Cathy, fighting off crows, puts her arms around Michele's waist and begins half-dragging, half-running down the hill. The two girls are running now, and Melanie is behind, fighting a sort of delaying action, swinging her jacket wildly as the crows hover in the air above her.

MELANIE The car! Get in that car!

The girls run toward a parked station wagon on the side of the road. Cathy opens the door and literally hurls Michele onto the front seat. Behind them, Melanie is clearly losing her battle with the crows, as one hits her with an enormous fluttering of great black wings. She seems dazed. She sobs, swinging the jacket. She begins to back

away, rushing for the car.

THE CROWS
hovering. Melanie throws her jacket, and then runs for the car, the crows in pursuit. She reaches the car, slides onto the seat, pulling the door shut.

THE WINDOW
on the driver's side as the door slams shut and a crow crashes instantly into the glass, shattering it, but not breaking it. The windshield is covered with crows beating against the glass. Michele is SCREAMING, her face bleeding. Melanie is in near-hysterics, gasping for breath. She begins to hit the CAR HORN.

THE CAR
from the outside, covered with crows, BEATING at the roof and windows, pecking, clawing. The HORN SHRILLS into the air. Steadily, Melanie keeps pounding at it. Beyond the car, and down the hill, we see men running toward the car. Some of the children have reached the hotel and summoned help.

THE MEN
running up the hill. Fishermen, idlers, men who were at work doing other things. They come without weapons, running up the hill toward the car. As they approach the car, the crows suddenly zoom into flight. Melanie is still HITTING the HORN.

THE CROWS
in flight as they go into the sky and gone.

THE MEN
staring up at the sky, their faces confused, anxious, bewildered.

THE ROAD
The men are standing impotently. There is no one to fight. Inside the car, Melanie is still HITTING the HORN even though the crows are gone. The SOUND is an awful, frightening one on the silent air.

DISSOLVE

INT. THE TIDES
It is lunchtime and there is a busy bustle to the place as DEKE CARTER officiates behind the bar and HELEN CARTER, his wife, rushes back and forth between diners at the tables. A DRUNK sits at the bar, old, grizzled, the weary wisdom of booze in him. In one of the booths sits SEBASTIAN SHOLES in his shirtsleeves, eating a hurried lunch quickly and efficiently. A WOMAN and TWO CHILDREN are seated at another table, about to order. A party of noisy SALESMEN is laughing and clowning around throughout following at a table in the rear. The phone from behind the bar has been placed on the counter, and Melanie is speaking into it while Deke listens. Over her head, the television set is blasting with its perennial Western, the gunshots punctuating her conversation.

This spread pages **125-132** of original script

MELANIE Daddy, there were hundreds of them. No, I'm not hysterical, I'm trying to tell you this as calmly as I know how. All right, Daddy. Yes, Daddy. *(She takes a deep breath)* Just now. Not . . . fifteen minutes ago.

The door to The Tides opens and MRS. BUNDY, sixtyish, wearing walking shoes and a tweed suit, a very masculine-looking woman with short clipped white hair, comes in, passes through foreground, goes to bar, her attention slowly caught by what Melanie is saying.

MELANIE At the school. No, I don't. Just a minute. *(To Deke)* What's the name of the school?

DEKE Just the Bodega Bay School. *(To Mrs. Bundy)* Help you, Mrs. Bundy?

MRS. BUNDY I need some change, Deke.

MELANIE *(As Deke opens cash register)* The Bodega Bay School. *(To Deke)* Could you turn that down, please? *(Deke gives Mrs. Bundy her change, turns off television)* I don't know how many children. Fifty, seventy-five—there are two classes. Yes.

Mrs. Bundy goes to cigarette machine, pauses to listen to Melanie.

MELANIE No, the birds didn't attack until the children were outside the school. Crows, I think. I don't *know*, Daddy. *Is* there a difference between crows and blackbirds?

MRS. BUNDY *(Turning from machine)* There is very definitely a difference, Miss.

MELANIE They're different, Daddy. *(To Mrs. Bundy)* Thank you. *(Into phone)* I think they were crows. Yes, hundreds of them. Yes, they *attacked* the children, *attacked* them. *(Exasperated)* Daddy, a little girl was sent to the hospital in Santa Rosa. Well, all right, but you act as if I'm . . . all right, all right. *(Pause)* No, I can't come home now. I just can't, Daddy. How is it there? I mean . . . are there birds? In the sky? But no trouble. Well, I hope . . . *(Pause)* I don't know when. I simply can't leave now. Tell Mother not to worry. All right, Daddy, goodbye.

She hangs up. Mrs. Bundy is at her elbow.

MRS. BUNDY They're both perching birds, of course, but of quite different species. The crow is brachyrhynchos. The blackbird is cyanocephalus.

MELANIE Thank you. *(To Deke)* Do you know Dan Fawcett's number?

DEKE In the book right here, Miss. *(As Melanie looks it up, to Mrs. Bundy)* I don't see what difference it makes, Mrs. Bundy, crows *or* blackbirds. If they attacked the school, that's pretty serious.

MRS. BUNDY *(With a superior smile)* I hardly think that either species would have the intelligence to launch a massed attack. Their brain pans aren't large enough for such . . .

MELANIE *(Dialing)* I just came from the school, Madam. I don't know about their brain pans, but . . .

MRS. BUNDY Birds are not aggressive creatures, Miss. They bring beauty to the world. It is mankind, rather, who . . .

HELEN *(Going to door leading to kitchen)* Three Southern fried chicken, Sam. Baked potato on all of them.

Laughter from salesmen at table.

MELANIE *(Into phone)* Hello, may I speak to Mitch Brenner, please? *(Pause)* Yes, I'll wait.

MRS. BUNDY *(Continuing to Deke)* . . . insist on making it difficult for life to survive on this planet. If it weren't for birds . . .

DEKE Mrs. Bundy, you don't seem to understand. This young lady says there was an attack on the school.

MRS. BUNDY Impossible.

MELANIE *(In background)* Mitch? I'm glad I caught you. Something terrible has happened. *(Her background conversation continues through following)*

DRUNK *(Suddenly)* It's the end of the world!

HELEN What's this about the school?

DEKE Bunch of crows attacked the school, Helen.

DRUNK It's the end of the world. *(Suddenly quoting)* "Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers and to the valleys; Behold, I, *even* I, will bring a sword upon you and I will destroy your high places."

HELEN The Lord's not destroying anything, Jason.

DRUNK "In all your dwelling places, the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be laid waste!" *(He nods)* *Ezekiel*, Chapter 6.

HELEN *(Quoting)* "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink."

DRUNK *(Nodding)* *Isaiah*, Chapter 5. It's the end of the world.

MELANIE Yes, all right, I'll wait for you. Goodbye. *(She hangs up)*

MRS. BUNDY *(Laughing)* I hardly think a few birds are going to bring about the end of the world.

MELANIE *(Turning to her)* There weren't a *few* birds.

THE WOMAN AND HER CHILDREN
waiting for their lunch, listen to the conversation, becoming very nervous.

DEKE I didn't even know there *were* many crows in Bodega Bay this time of year.

MRS. BUNDY The crow is a permanent resident throughout its range. In fact, during our Christmas count, we recorded . . .

SHOLES *(Suddenly, from his table)* How many *gulls* did you count, Mrs. Bundy?

MRS. BUNDY Which gulls, Mr. Sholes? There are several varieties.

SHOLES The ones that've been raising the devil with my fishing boats.

MRS. BUNDY Probably herring gulls. They arrive in November, you know, and don't migrate north again until March or . . .

MELANIE *(Leaping upon this)* Have you had trouble with gulls?

SHOLES One of my boats did last week.

DEKE *(Making a connection)* This young lady got *hit* by a gull only Saturday.

SAM'S VOICE *(From kitchen)* Pick up the chicken.

HELEN Now it's gulls. A minute ago it was *crows*. *(She picks up tray, shrugs, goes to table)* Deke, I'm still waiting for those Bloody Marys!

DEKE Coming right up!

THE WOMAN
as Helen brings food. She is beginning to get really frightened.

WOMAN Could you ask them to lower their voices, please? They're frightening the children.

LITTLE GIRL Timmy has a canary.

HELEN That's nice. Are you Timmy?

LITTLE BOY My *cousin* is Timmy.

SHOLES *(Leaving table, coming to bar)* A whole *flock* of gulls nearly capsized one of my boats. Practically tore off the skipper's arm.

HELEN *(Coming back)* You're scaring the kids. Keep it low.

DEKE You're scaring *me*, too. Are you trying to say all these . . . *(He shakes his head)* That sounds impossible, Sebastian.

SHOLES I'm only telling you what happened to my boat.

MRS. BUNDY The gulls were after your fish, Mr. Sholes. Really, let's be logical about this.

MELANIE What were the *crows* after at the school?

MRS. BUNDY What do *you* think they were after, Miss . . .?

MELANIE Daniels. I think they were after the children.

MRS. BUNDY For what purpose?

MELANIE To . . . *(She hesitates)* To *kill* them.

There is a long silence.

MRS. BUNDY Why?

Another silence.

MELANIE I don't know why.

MRS. BUNDY I thought not. Birds have been on this planet since archeopteryx, Miss Daniels; a hundred and twenty million years ago!

A TRAVELING SALESMAN enters, goes to bar, listens.

MRS. BUNDY Doesn't it seem odd that they'd wait all that time to start a . . . a war against humanity?

MELANIE No one called it a war!

SALESMAN Scotch, light on the water.

MRS. BUNDY You and Mr. Sholes seem to be implying as much.

HELEN Are you finished here, Sebastian?

SHOLES Let me have some apple pie, Helen. *(To Mrs. Bundy)* Who said anything about war? All I said was that some gulls . . .

HELEN *(Yelling to kitchen)* One apple pie! You want more coffee?

SHOLES No. . . .came down on one of my boats. They *could* have been after the fish, just as you said.

SALESMAN Your captain should have shot at them.

SHOLES What?

SALESMAN Gulls are scavengers, anyway. Most birds are. If you ask me, we should wipe them *all* out. World would be better off without them.

MRS. BUNDY *(Outraged)* Birds?

SALESMAN Yeah, birds. All they do is make a mess of everything. Who needs them?

MRS. BUNDY *We* need them.

SALESMAN Not if they're starting a war.

MRS. BUNDY They are *incapable* of organized warfare!

MELANIE Are they incapable of instinct?

MRS. BUNDY Their instinct is not war-like!

MELANIE Have you ever seen a jay protecting a nest?

MRS. BUNDY I have seen jays doing everything it is conceivable for jays to do. Ornithology happens to be my avocation, Miss Daniels. You're talking about preservation of the species, a hen protecting her young. There's a vast difference between . . .

MELANIE Maybe they're *all* protecting the species. Maybe they're tired of being shot at and roasted in ovens and . . .

MRS. BUNDY Are you discussing gamebirds now? *All* birds are not gamebirds, you know.

MELANIE I don't know anything about birds except that they're *attacking* this town.

SALESMAN Then fight them back. Get yourselves guns and wipe them off the face of the earth.

MRS. BUNDY That would hardly be possible.

DEKE Why not, Mrs. Bundy?

MRS. BUNDY Because there are eight thousand six hundred and fifty species of birds in the world today, Mr. Carter. It's estimated that five billion, seven hundred and fifty million birds live in the United States alone. The five continents of the world . . .

SALESMAN *(Muttering)* Kill them all. Get rid of them. Nasty animals.

MRS. BUNDY . . . probably contain more than a hundred billion birds!

DRUNK It's the end of the world!

DEKE Well, we seem to have more than our share of them right now, Mrs. Bundy. Maybe this young lady's right. Maybe they've all gone crazy.

HELEN Here's your pie, Sebastian. You want it at the table?

SHOLES No. Here's fine. *(He begins eating)*

HELEN Where are the Bloody Marys, Deke?

DEKE Coming.

HELEN *(Angrily)* Are we running a business here—or a bird sanctuary?

SHOLES *(Beginning to change his mind)* Actually, these gulls *must* have been after the fish.

MRS. BUNDY Of course.

SHOLES Makes a lot more sense than . . . well, an *attack*.

MRS. BUNDY Of course it does. If we believe that birds are attacking, why . . . why, next we'll believe that grasshoppers and cockroaches are capable of . . .

This spread pages **132-141** of original script

DRUNK Cockroaches! Urghh!

The woman is getting more and more anxious.

WOMEN Hurry, children. Finish your lunch.

BOY Are the birds going to eat us, Mommy?

SHOLES Maybe we're all getting a little carried away by this. Admittedly, a few birds acted strangely. That's no reason to believe . . .

MELANIE This isn't a few birds! I keep telling you that! These are gulls and swifts and crows and . . .

MRS. BUNDY And what? Vultures? Hawks? *Eagles?*

MELANIE Maybe! Is it impossible?

MRS. BUNDY Yes. I have never known birds of different species to flock together. The very concept is unimaginable. *(Laughing)* Why, if that happened, we wouldn't have a chance. How could we possibly hope to fight them?

SHOLES We couldn't. You're right, Mrs. Bundy.

WOMAN *(Calling from table)* Excuse me, may I have a check, please?

HELEN *(Concerned)* Is everything all right, ma'am?

WOMAN Yes, I . . . I'm anxious to get on the road.

SAM *(Coming from kitchen)* What's the matter? Something wrong out here?

DEKE Nothing's wrong.

SAM All this shouting.

MRS. BUNDY We're fighting a war, Sam.

SAM A war? Against who? Did the Russians . . . ?

SHOLES Against birds.

WOMAN *(Suddenly)* I'm glad you all think this is so amusing. You've frightened my children half out of their wits.

BOY I'm not scared, Mommy.

WOMAN Keep quiet. If that young lady saw an attack on the school, why won't you believe her?

SAM What attack? *Who* attacked the school?

WOMAN *Birds* did. Crows! And you're all sitting around here *debating*! What do you want them to do next? Crash through that window?

LITTLE GIRL *(Frightened by her mother)* Mommy!

WOMAN Quiet! Why don't you all get home? Lock your doors and windows! *(Her hysteria rising)* Put on your coats, children! *(To Deke)* What's the fastest road to San Francisco?

DEKE The freeway, ma'am.

WOMAN Where do I get it?

SALESMAN I'm going out that way, lady. You can follow me.

WOMAN Then let's go. Now!

SALESMAN I haven't finished my drink.

WOMAN *(On edge of panic, shouting at her children)* Put on your coats! Do you want to get *trapped* here?

BOY I can't find my scarf.

WOMAN Look in your sleeve!

The door opens. Mitch and Al Malone come in.

MITCH Melanie?

At the far table, the salesmen begin singing rowdily.

MITCH *(Going to her)* I got here as fast as I could. Where's Cathy?

MELANIE At Annie's house. She's all right.

SAM Al, why aren't you over there where the attack was?

MALONE Because I just got back from Dan Fawcett's place, that's why.

MITCH He was killed last night. By birds.

MALONE Now hold it, Mitch. You don't know that for a fact.

MRS. BUNDY What *are* the facts, Mr. Malone?

MALONE Santa Rosa police think it was a felony murder. They think a burglar broke in and killed him.

WOMAN Were the Santa Rosa police at your school today? *(Impatiently, to salesman)* *Are* you coming?

SALESMAN Take it easy, lady. *(Through window)* There isn't a bird anywhere in sight.

DRUNK *(Quoting)* "Look at the birds in the air: they do not sow or reap, yet your heavenly father feeds them."

WOMAN I'll never feed another bird as long as I live!

SALESMAN Something like this happened in Santa Cruz last year. The town was covered with seagulls.

WOMAN Can you *please* finish your drink?

MRS. BUNDY That's right, sir, I recall it. A large flock of seagulls got lost in a fog and headed in for the town, where all the lights were.

SALESMAN They made some mess, too, smashing into houses and everything. *(Shaking his head)* They *always* make a mess. We're better off without them.

MRS. BUNDY The point is that no one seemed to get upset about it. They were gone the next morning, just as if nothing at all had happened. Poor things.

WOMAN I'm leaving! Are you coming?

SALESMAN All right, all right! *(He downs his drink)* Hope you figure this out, folks.

DRUNK It's the end of the world!

The salesman and the woman and children go out. The Tides is silent for a moment.

SHOLES Well, I'd better get back to the cannery. What do I owe you, Deke?

DEKE Let's see. Scallops and coffee . . .

MITCH Hold it just a minute, Sebastian. *(Sholes turns to him)*

MITCH
his face very serious.

MITCH Sebastian, I'm not an alarmist.

SHOLES No one ever said you were, Mitch.

MITCH *(Flatly)* I think we're in trouble. I don't know how or why this started, but I know it's here and I know we'd be crazy to ignore it.

MRS. BUNDY *(Sarcastically)* Ignore what? The *bird* war?

MITCH *(Exploding)* Yes, the *bird* war, the bird attack, the bird plague, you can call it what you want to, they're out there massing someplace and they'll be back, you can count on that!

MRS. BUNDY Ridiculous!

MITCH Mrs. Bundy, why don't you go home and polish your binoculars?

SAM Go on, Mitch.

MITCH If we don't do something *now*, if we don't get Bodega Bay on the move . . .

SHOLES Look, Mitch, even if this *is* true, even if all the birds . . .

MITCH Do *you* believe it's true, Sebastian?

SHOLES *(After a long pause)* No. I don't, Mitch. Because I can't see any reason for it.

MITCH It's happening. Isn't that a good enough reason?

SHOLES *(Thoughtfully)* I like Bodega Bay as well as any man. If I thought . . . *(He shakes his head)*

MITCH Then help me, Sebastian. You're an important man in this town. If you'll help, the rest will.

SHOLES Help how? What do you want to do?

MITCH I'm not sure, but . . .

SHOLES If you don't even know what you want to do . . .

MELANIE Listen to him, please.

SAM *(Taking position beside Melanie)* You listen to him, Sebastian!

MITCH I only know we've got to drive them away from town—before they drive *us* away.

SHOLES How?

MITCH *(Desperately)* Mrs. Bundy, you said something about Santa Cruz. About seagulls getting lost in a fog, and heading in for the lights.

DEKE We don't have any fog this time of year, Mitch.

MITCH We'll make our own fog.

SHOLES How do you plan to do that?

MITCH With smoke.

MALONE There's an ordinance against burning anything in this town, unless it's . . .

MITCH We'll use smoke pots. The kind they've got up at the apple orchards.

DEKE They're for keeping frost away. Anyway, what good'll they do? Smoke's as bad as birds.

MRS. BUNDY Birds are *not* bad!

SHOLES How can we go on living here if we blanket the town with smoke?

MITCH Can we go on living here otherwise? Mrs. Bundy said lights attracted them in Santa Cruz. All right, let's use lights here, too. Let's set up a hundred of them across the bay, in the shallows. The smoke might confuse the birds, and maybe they'll head out for the lights, away from the town. *(Pause. They are silent. Then, desperately:)* It's worth a try!

SAM *(Slowly)* It's worth a try, Sebastian.

There is more silence as they all consider. And then suddenly:

MELANIE Look!

They turn toward the window. A half-dozen gulls are circling in the sky.

DEKE *(Alarmed)* Gulls!

MITCH They're back!

SHOLES They're only a few birds! What are you . . .

But as they go to the window, the gulls suddenly dive, swooping past the window, immediately outside in swift, terrifying close-up. Mitch and Melanie follow the descending gulls with their eyes . We see the gulls descend toward the gas station where an ATTENDANT is in the act of filling up a car with gasoline. He leaves the locked and flowing hose in the tank, takes rag from his pocket, and begins to

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move toward the front of the car. A white streak flashes from the sky. Another. Another, like sudden arrows. A GULL strikes the attendant full in the face. The attendant falls as more white arrows streak from the sky at him. He falls across the tautly stretched hose, hitting his head on bumper of car. THE HOSE NOZZLE is pulled from the tank, gasoline still spurting, as the attendant falls across the hose.

INT. THE TIDES
Mitch dashes toward the door – Melanie after him. Through the glass windows into the street we see people dashing off to the right, in the direction of the gas station. At the door Mitch turns.

MITCH *(To Melanie)* Stay back in there.

Deke Carter comes running from behind the bar to join Mitch. They both EXIT. Melanie dashes back to her original place at the window. Melanie looks out the window. From Melanie's viewpoint we see the crowd rushing toward the fallen attendant. The gulls are still attacking and the men try to fight them off. Melanie suddenly looks down. From Melanie's viewpoint we see the flow of gasoline trickling toward the car parked below her. At this particular moment, a car has pulled up, has come to a stop and a man emerges. He is in the act of lighting his dead cigar but his attention is drawn to the happenings around the gas station. With this half-drawn attention, he strikes the match and holds it to the cigar. Melanie quickly slides the window open and yells to the man. The man looks about him, holding the match in his fingers. As he catches sight of Melanie, the match burns his fingers and he drops it.

THE PARKING AREA
Three fast explosions in a row as the man's car, Mitch's car, and the one next to it go up in flames.

CLOSE SHOT – THE HORRIFIED FACE OF MELANIE

THE PARKING AREA
as a line of flame runs swiftly from the burning cars, following the gasoline on the ground, directly to the pump. THE PUMP explodes. THE SHOPS NEAR THE GAS STATION, as flame hits them, begin to catch. Men come running up from the docks shouting. There is another explosion as the fourth car goes up. The flames from the shops are spreading rapidly. We HEAR the local air-raid-fire-alarm SIREN go off as the men hastily set up a hose-and-bucket brigade from the docks. Mitch joins the other men as they try to control the flames. THE SHOPS across the road are in roaring flames now, MEN RUNNING PAST THE FLAMES.

MAN Get those hoses in the water!

Mitch hurls a bucket of water at the flames. Melanie comes dashing out of The Tides restaurant.

A car with a flashing blue light, one of the volunteer firemen, pulls in. Hoses are stretched to the waterfront now, and men are rushing up to the flames with them. Mitch and Deke pick up the nozzle together, turn it on.

DEKE Well, we got our smoke all right.

Hoses stretched, men operating them, other men still passing buckets full of water. The place is an inferno, blazing hotly and brightly. A FIRE ENGINE comes down the street, BELL clanging, stopping in the road before the shops. Melanie ducks as a flaming piece of timber falls near her. The volunteer firemen begin to take hoses from the engine. A shadow suddenly falls across them. ANOTHER GROUP OF MEN, passing buckets. The shadow reaches them. MITCH AND DEKE, as the shadow touches them. Mitch, as the shadow crosses his face. He looks up.

THE SKY
Black with birds. Hundreds of thousands of birds hovering in the air for an instant. And then they dive.

THE SHOP AREA
as the birds strike through the billowing smoke. For an instant, there is only the stunned silence of surprise. And then the men react and begin trying to fight off the birds. There is a terrible clamor now as the birds shriek and caw and the men shout. A GROUP OF MEN turn the hose onto descending birds: A STREAM OF WATER with hundreds of birds bursting through it, hundreds of thrusting beaks. A MAN with a bucket hurls the contents at the CAMERA and then is suddenly overwhelmed by birds. He backs away from them, into the flames, and screams in terror.

FIREMAN *(Shouting)* Hawks! There's hawks with 'em!

THE SHOP AREA
Men falling as the swift arrows strike in dazzling colored streaks. Hoses are twisting like snakes now, out of control. The fire is raging behind the men as they struggle against the birds. One man, in flames, runs down toward the docks and water.

ON THE DOCK
Man in flames, ready to leap. GULLS, hundreds of them, waiting just off the dock, hover in the air. THE MAN JUMPS almost into the waiting gulls. They descend swiftly, hitting the water almost as he does. MEN ARE RUNNING, dropping their hoses, racing away from the fire and the birds.

DEKE It's no use, Mitch. *(He releases his grip on the hose)*

MITCH Where are you going?

DEKE Get inside, Mitch. It's no use. There's too many of them!

MITCH Deke, wait a minute!

Deke drops the hose and runs from Mitch. He is attacked immediately, felled, covered with birds. Men run past Mitch in panic now, away from the flames and the birds. MELANIE struggles against birds, losing the battle.

MELANIE *(Shrieking)* Mitch!

MITCH is in the panicking crowd, being carried along. He tries to get to Melanie, but the crowd insistently shoves him in the opposite direction. There are women in the crowd now, waitresses, shoppers, guests from the motel. Mitch tries to turn and a wild-eyed man swings at him. He ducks the blow, shoves the man aside. MELANIE is backed against the wall, the birds striking her and the wall, thrusting, falling dead, hundreds of them.

THE CROWD
wide-eyed, panic-stricken, shoving and pushing.

Mitch reaches Melanie and swings his jacket at the birds. He grabs her hand, and they begin running onto the road. They pass a car covered with birds. The car swerves out of control and into one of the telephone poles. Melanie and Mitch run with the crowd. They pass a store with a plate-glass front. Thousands of birds strike the glass, and it crashes. A man and a woman come running out of the store and are instantly covered with birds.

A HAWK, claws spread in that halting half-motion just before it strikes. A CHILD screams as the hawk's shadow comes over its face. THE CROWD, running. A baby carriage is overturned. MELANIE AND MITCH, breaking away from the crowd. They duck into a doorway as a half-dozen birds pepper the walls like buckshot and fall dead.

MITCH This way!

MELANIE *(Sobbing)* Where are you going?

MITCH We've got to get Annie and Cathy.

MELANIE Your car . . .

MITCH It went up in the explosion. We'll use yours.

MITCH AND MELANIE
rush out of the doorway, running to Melanie's parked car. They start it and begin driving past POWER LINES, thousands of birds on them. The lines snap. There is a crackling, sputtering flash of electricity as the wires hit the street. There are more screams. A MAN with a shotgun fires into the air at the birds. He fires the second barrel. Before he can reload, he is overwhelmed. Melanie and Mitch drive up a hill toward the school. They pass a patch of corn in one of the backyards. There is a SCARECROW in the patch. A horde of crows rip and tear at it, destroying it.

MELANIE AND MITCH
in the car, going up the hill. There is the sudden sound of church bells ringing. They look toward the church. THE CHURCH STEEPLE is covered with flying birds. THE CHURCH BELLS are ringing as the birds strike them in fury. THE CHURCH DOORS open as thousands of birds swarm into it.

Melanie and Mitch pull up in front of Annie's house and get out. Mitch runs to Annie's house. He suddenly stops dead in his tracks. A woman is crumpled lifelessly on the front steps before the door. Mitch reaches the body. He rolls it over. ANNIE is dead. The shock registers on Mitch's face. Melanie realizes that Annie is dead, and wonders for a moment what Mitch's reaction will be. Mitch kneels silently by the body. Gently, he touches Annie's face, and then gently and illogically takes off his jacket and covers her, as if he is tucking a blanket around her to keep her warm. He turns away toward THE WINDOW, with its ROOM TO LET sign. CATHY is standing near the sign, her eyes peering at something outside. Mitch turns to follow Cathy's gaze.

MIXED BIRDS, malevolent, sit on the fence, the killers. In a fury, Mitch picks up stones and begins hurling them at the birds. Melanie gets out of the car.

MELANIE *(As the birds flutter into the air)* Mitch! Don't!

She runs to him, grabs his arm, struggles with him as he maniacally continues hurling stones at the birds, who are now in hovering flight.

MELANIE Please! Get Cathy! Let's get out of here!

Her words reach him. Breathing heavily, he goes into the house and comes out carrying Cathy, who is dazed and in a state of shock. The car pulls away from the house. Mitch, Cathy and Melanie face the CAMERA, tensely. Cathy is staring ahead of her, her eyes wide, her lip trembling. They drive in silence, and then suddenly, Cathy begins speaking, almost as if to herself, as the CAMERA COMES IN TIGHT on her face in shock.

CATHY We . . . we heard the explosion and went outside to . . . to see what . . . what it was. *(Pause)* All at once the . . . the birds were everywhere. All at once. She . . . she pushed me inside and . . . they covered her. *(Pause)* Annie. *(Pause)* She pushed me inside.

Melanie takes the child in her arms to comfort her. Mitch turns to look at the town, in flames, smoke billowing from the buildings, the sky still full of birds.

MITCH *(O.S.) (Tiredly)* The smoke wouldn't have helped, anyway.

DISSOLVE

CLOSE SHOT – A LONE GULL
flying low over the water, the CAMERA TRACKING it. The bay is silent. The gull spreads its wings to brake, and then sits on the water. The CAMERA continues low over the water, going through thousands of gulls sitting there patiently, as if it is threading itself through a crowd, not a sound, over the gulls, and then lifting to show the Brenner house in the distance.

EXT. THE BRENNER HOUSE
Behind the panes of glass, we can see the boards Mitch nailed across the windows. He is on the roof now, testing the two attic dormer windows. He turns to look out over THE BAY, covered with sitting gulls. In the distance, the town is still smoldering. But the sky is clear of birds. Mitch picks up his hammer, sliding over the shingles to where the ladder leans against the side of the house. He comes down the ladder and Melanie turns the corner, carrying a load of driftwood and old lumber. She drops the wood outside the door and he joins her. She is looking out over the bay when he comes to her. This is not the Melanie we saw at the beginning of the picture. Her hair is disarrayed, and her face and clothing are streaked with soot. But beyond a surface physical appearance, there is a weary wisdom in her eyes, and a strength to her as she stands looking toward the distant smoldering town.

MELANIE The town looks clear.

MITCH The *bay* doesn't.

MELANIE How long have they been gathering?

MITCH The past fifteen minutes. *(Pause)* It seems to be a pattern, doesn't it? They strike and disappear, and then they start massing again.

Melanie nods. They are both silent, watching the bay.

MELANIE I keep thinking of Annie lying on that . . . on that doorstep. *(She squeezes her eyes shut)*

MITCH *(After a long pause)* It . . . it doesn't look very different, does it? A little smoke over the town, but otherwise . . .

MELANIE *(Looking)* Even the birds sitting out there. It does look very much the same, Mitch. This could be last week.

MITCH It may not be last week again for a long long time.

They are both silent.

MELANIE Look. They're still coming.

Mitch nods. Silence.

MITCH Do you want to try your father again?

Melanie shakes her head. Puzzled, Mitch looks at her.

MELANIE I tried a little while ago. The phone's dead.

MITCH Have we still got power?

MELANIE Yes. *(Leaning against him)* I'm tired, Mitch. I'm so very very tired.

LYDIA *(O.S.)* Mitch! I'm getting something on the radio!

INT. THE LIVING ROOM
Lydia is hovering near the radio. Cathy is sitting on a footstool. The windows are boarded, and the lights in the room are on. A tremendous amount of static is coming from the radio as Mitch and Melanie join them.

LYDIA I can't get any of the local stations. I think this is San Francisco.

ANNOUNCER . . . would include the formulation of a central financing committee to handle credit and to allocate responsibility for the various facets of the project. A vote on the motion is expected early tomorrow morning. Continuing with the local news, police are still investigating the series of valuable jade burglaries in the Chinatown area. The roundup of known criminals has not as yet produced a suspect, but Commissioner Nelson said today he was certain the burglaries were quote linked and the work of a team of professionals unquote. *(Pause)* In Bodega Bay early this morning, a large flock of crows attacked a group of children who were leaving the school during a fire drill. One little girl was seriously injured and taken to the hospital in Santa Rosa, but the majority of children reached safety in the town. *(Pause)* On the national scene today, the opening of the new session of Congress was marked by a State of the Union address that . . .

MITCH Is that all?

ANNOUNCER *(O.S.)* . . . drew a standing ovation for the President. The Chief Executive, in discussing our relation to Europe and the rest of the world community, said: "These various elements in our foreign policy lead as I have said to a single goal—

MITCH *(Sighing)* We're going to need more wood for the fire. We can't let it go out.

LYDIA Did you get the windows in the attic, Mitch?

MITCH I got them all, Mother.

LYDIA When do you think they'll come?

(Radio continues as a drone in the background)—the goal for a peaceful world of free and independent states. *(Pause)* This is our guide for the present and our vision for the future—a free community of nations, independent but interdependent, uniting north and south, east and west, in one great family of man, outgrowing and transcending the

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MITCH I don't know.

LYDIA If there are . . . larger birds, Mitch . . . they'll . . . they'll get into the house.

MITCH That's a chance we have to take.

LYDIA Maybe we ought to leave.

MITCH Not now. Not while they're massing out there.

LYDIA When?

MITCH I don't know when. We'll see what . . .

LYDIA Where will we go?

MITCH I don't know yet. I think we'll be safe here. *(Pause)* Let's bring that wood in.

LYDIA What happens when we run out of wood?

MITCH I don't know. We'll break up the furni . . .

LYDIA *(Shouting)* You don't know, you don't know! When will you know? When we're all *dead*? Like Annie!

CATHY *(Shrieking it, her face white)* Mother!

LYDIA *(At Mitch)* If your father were here . . .

hate and fears that rend out age. *(Pause)* We will not reach that goal today or tomorrow. We may not reach it in our lifetime. But the quest is the great adventure of our century. We sometimes chafe at the burden of our obligations, the complexity of our decisions, the agony of our choices, but there is no comfort or security for us in evasion, no solution in abdication, no relief in irresponsibility. *(Pause)* A year ago, in assuming the tasks of the Presidency, I said that few generations in all history, had been granted the role of becoming the great defender of freedom in its hour of maximum danger. This is our good fortune, and I welcome it now as I did a year ago. *(Pause)* For it is the fate of this generation—of you in the Congress and of me as President—to live with a struggle we did not start, in a world we did not make. But the pressures of life are not always distributed by choice. And while no nation has ever faced such a challenge, no nation has ever been so ready to seize the burden and the glory of freedom, and in this I endeavor, may God watch over the United States of America." *(Pause)* This is Alfred Dougherty speaking for CBS News in San Francisco.

The news broadcast gives way to an INTERLUDE of recorded MUSIC. The music is sweet, with violins and long piano arpeggios, almost too much to bear against the tension being played in front of it.

MITCH *(Sharply) Mother*! I'm trying my best! *(Shaking his head)* I'm . . . trying . . . my . . .

LYDIA *(Trembling, nodding)* I'm sorry. *(Pause)* I'm sorry, Mitch.

Mitch, the strain showing on his face. He nods briefly.

MITCH Let's get the wood. Why . . . why don't you make us all some coffee, Mother?

EXT. THE HOUSE

as Melanie and Mitch come out and head for the pile of wood. There is a NOISE in the sky. Startled, glancing upward, they begin to run back toward the house and then stop and slowly scan the sky. An ENORMOUS FLOCK OF BIRDS is flying in tight formation.

MELANIE Where are they heading?

MITCH Inland.

MELANIE Santa Rosa?

MITCH Maybe.

Melanie watches the birds. A look of utter sadness crosses her face. It is clear that she is thinking the birds will reach Santa Rosa, and eventually San Francisco as well.

MITCH *(O.S.) (Gently)* Come on. Let's get this wood in.

Melanie nods. But the look of sadness stays on her face, and her eyes remain on the sky.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM

Lydia is pouring coffee into cups. In the dining room, we can hear the CHATTER of the lovebirds. As Lydia pours the sound distracts her. Cathy is sorting candles at the couch. There is evidence of preparation everywhere: flashlights, kerosene lamps, a butane burner. Mitch is at the fireplace putting more wood on the fire. Melanie comes into the room and dumps another load.

MELANIE That's the last of it.

LYDIA Did you close the door?

MELANIE *And* locked it.

CATHY Mitch, can I bring the lovebirds in here?

LYDIA *(Snapping)* No!

CATHY Mom, they're in a cage!

LYDIA They're *birds*!

Mitch, studying his mother, realizes how close she is to breaking.

MITCH *(Softly)* Let them stay in the other room.

Lydia's hand trembles as she pours the coffee. They all sit and accept their coffee. The room is silent except for the CRACKLE of the FIRE. Mitch rises to put more wood on the fire. In the dining room, the lovebirds are still CHATTERING wildly. Their chirping is the only sound in the house.

CATHY Mitch? Why are they doing this? The birds.

MITCH *(Putting wood on fire)* I don't know, honey.

CATHY Why are they trying to kill people?

MITCH I wish I could say. But if I could answer that, I could also tell you why *people* are trying to kill people.

The room is silent again except for the tweeting of the lovebirds offscreen. And then, suddenly, the lovebirds fall silent.

Cathy turns to look toward the other room, her face going white, her eyes widening. Melanie waits. Lydia waits. Mitch waits. The room is dead silent now, each of them sitting on the edges of their chairs, waiting. There is the SUDDEN SOUND of splintering glass.

LYDIA Mitch . . .

MITCH Shhh. Shhh.

Silence. Into the silence, another pane of glass, SHATTERING, the THUD of a bird against the boards. Silence. More panes of glass SHATTERING. The SOUND of birds striking the boards and the outside of the house begins building, almost like muffled drumbeats. THUD, THUD, with an irregularity of rhythm. Interspersed, like the counterpoint in an alien orchestration, is the FLUTTER of wings. And then, like another section entering, we begin to hear the SCRATCHING and CLAWING at the roof. Lydia looks up toward the roof, the SOUND getting louder. She squeezes her eyes shut. Cathy cuddles up into Melanie's arms. Over the other sounds, there comes a NEW SOUND, the unmistakable rat-tat-tat-tat of a woodpecker. It stops. It begins again. Rat-tat-tat-tat.

CATHY *(In terror)* I'm . . . I'm sick, Melanie. I want to . . . I want to throw . . .

Her face pale, she rises suddenly and starts for the bathroom.

MELANIE I'll go with you.

They leave the room. Mitch and Lydia sit in silence. We hear Cathy retching offscreen, almost drowned out by the shuffling of wings and the rasping of claws, the incessant thudding of birds striking the house.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. THE ROOM

Lydia is asleep on the couch. Cathy and Melanie are curled up in the easy chair together, asleep. Mitch is sitting awake by the fireplace. He puts more wood on the fire. The SOUND of the birds is still everywhere around the house. He looks at his watch. He rises, walks into the kitchen to check the back door. It seems all right. The CAMERA FOLLOWS him into the dining room. He stops at the cage with the lovebirds. They are watching him. Is there menace or innocence in their eyes? He cannot tell. Mitch looks at the lovebirds in puzzlement. There is suddenly a NEW SOUND offscreen, the splintering of wood, the tearing sound of bigger beaks. Alarmed, he turns. He comes into the entry hall. THE FRONT DOOR is beginning to splinter as the bigger birds outside assail the door.

Mitch turns quickly, the CAMERA FOLLOWING him into the dining room. He pulls the cloth off the table, begins moving it toward the door. In the entry, he lifts the table on end and piles it against the door. He goes into the kitchen again, CAMERA FOLLOWING. He upends the enamel-topped table, drags it to the back door. He is piling chairs against the table when Melanie comes in.

MELANIE *(Sleepily)* Mitch?

MITCH Hi. I thought you were asleep.

MELANIE I heard you out here.

They are silent. The CLAWING and the PECKING fills the void. The noise is a din now, insidious and increasingly more frightening.

MELANIE When will they stop?

MITCH I thought they'd have stopped by now.

MELANIE What time is it?

MITCH Almost two a.m.

MELANIE Have you been up all this time?

MITCH Yes.

MELANIE You must be exhausted.

MITCH I wanted to watch the fire.

The CAMERA FOLLOWS them into the dining room. The lovebirds are sitting in their cage, close together, silent. Mitch picks up a chair, ready to carry it to the front door. He hesitates, puts down the chair, goes to the cage. Mitch looks at the birds, wondering. The birds look back at him. Again, it is impossible to read their expressions. Malice or benevolence? Mitch raises his hand, brings it toward the bars of the cage. The birds watch, unmoving. Mitch thrusts his finger through the bars. The birds sit unmoving. One of them tweets.

MITCH I wonder if Cathy fed them.

He turns away from her, goes to the cupboard, opens the door, takes out a small box of bird feed. His hand approaches the door of the cage. The birds are watching him. His hand hesitates. Then his thumb and forefinger lift the small catch on the cage door. His fingers open the door. Cautiously, in TIGHT CLOSE-UP, his hand goes into the cage. The birds sit and watch. One of them tweets. He removes the small feeding tray, puts the bird

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seed into it, replaces it in the cage. The birds hesitate another moment. Then, tweeting, they begin to eat.

INT. THE DINING ROOM
as Mitch closes the door to the cage. Melanie is slumped against the wall. He goes to her and takes her in his arms. Wearily, she raises her head. The SOUND of the shuffling, pecking, clawing BIRDS is everywhere around them.

MITCH *(Holding her)* You should have left when you wanted to. *(She shakes her head)* You'd have been safe in San Francisco.

MELANIE I don't want to be safe. I want to be with you.

There is something pathetically comic about her voice, like a small child's, confused but defiant. Holding her close, Mitch laughs, and she laughs with him. Exhausted, they stand in each other's arms, laughing in that weary, silly, dead of night sort of way. And suddenly . . .

The LIGHTS go out.

MITCH *(In the darkness)* The power.

MELANIE Mitch . . .

MITCH Wait here. Don't move.

The screen is totally black for perhaps five seconds. In the blackness, we HEAR the BIRDS clawing and ripping, and the sound is enormously magnified. A flashlight suddenly goes on.

MELANIE AND MITCH
as he comes to her with the flash. We see them only dimly as he directs the beam downwards.

MITCH We'd better light some of those lamps.

MELANIE No . . . wait. *(Pause)* Hold me.

In the near darkness, we see them embrace and kiss. It is almost black in the room. We HEAR their sudden intake of breath.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. THE LIVING ROOM
A kerosene lamp is burning. Melanie is awake, watching the fire. Lydia is still asleep on the couch. Cathy is curled up in one of the easy chairs. Mitch is asleep by the fire. The fire is burning brightly and steadily. The house is almost still. There is no longer the sound of the clawing and pecking, but there is another SOUND now: the sound of SOMETHING FALLING, or dropping in a steady dribbling, difficult to place. Melanie listens to the curious sound, trying to fathom its meaning.

MELANIE *(Whispering)* Mitch?

Melanie turns toward him.

MELANIE *(Still whispering)* Mitch?

Mitch is asleep.

Melanie, seeing this, makes her decision. The sound is still coming from somewhere in the house. She decides to let Mitch sleep and investigate it herself. She rises, goes to the table, picks up a very long flashlight. She goes through the house, checking. She stops in the entry hall, plays the flashlight over the furniture piled against the door. Everything seems all right. She goes into the kitchen, again checks the door, and then plays the beam on the boarded windows. Satisfied, she goes down the corridor outside the bedroom. She comes out into the corridor again, opens the second bedroom door, again checks the windows, and leaves.

Melanie climbs the steps to the attic. She stops outside the first door upstairs, opens it, goes into the room, plays the light on the windows. Nothing. She comes out into the corridor, goes to the second bedroom, opens the door, enters, walks to the windows. They are boarded securely. She is starting back toward the door when she stops.

On the floor is a pile of chipped and broken plaster. Melanie turns the flashlight up toward the ceiling. There is a huge hole in it, showing moonlit sky outside. Melanie turns her eyes from the ceiling, determination on her face, and suddenly, her eyes open wide.

AN OWL, sitting in the darkness, stares at her, its wings spread in the beam of light.

Melanie runs for the door. The owl hits her, sends her sprawling backward. She looks up at the ceiling, a swarm of mixed birds coming through the hole. Three or four birds escape into the hallway. Melanie literally hurls herself across the room and slams the door shut.

MITCH
as the slam startles him out of sleep.

MELANIE
in the room swinging the lighted flashlight as the owl and several other birds attack her. She backs against the door.

MITCH
barreling up the steps with a flashlight in one hand and a piece of timber in the other. He is attacked the moment he reaches the landing. At the bottom of the steps, Lydia rushes into view, alarmed.

LYDIA What is it?

MELANIE
in the room, as the owl hits her full in the face. She

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swings the flashlight as the birds attack her.

MITCH *(O.S.)* Melanie!

MELANIE Keep away!

She turns toward the door. Her hand throws the bolt. Melanie and the birds, grotesque and silent as she struggles with them. The room is a crossing cacophony of mixed light beams and fluttering wings.

MITCH *(O.S.)* Melanie, open the door!

He hurls himself against it. Inside the room, where Melanie struggles, we hear his hammering on it.

MELANIE No, they'll get in the house!

Her voice dies as she is overwhelmed by the birds. She falls to the floor, the flashlight beside her. In the spreading rays of the light, we see the frantic fluttering of wings as the birds cover her. There is a stronger assault on the door by Mitch outside.

LYDIA *(O.S.) (Screaming)* Mitch, get her out of there!

The door, and the slip bolt on it. Melanie, collapsed at the base of the door, is no longer in view. Neither are the birds, whose fluttering shadows we see on the door as Mitch again hits it from outside.

MITCH *(O.S.)* Melanie!

The bolt begins to give. We see it weakening, and suddenly it rips loose from the jamb. Mitch bursts inward and he stumbles into the room. He begins swinging at the birds immediately, reaching down for Melanie, fighting off the attack at the same time. He begins dragging her out of the room. Her clothes have almost been shredded from her body, and her face is torn and bleeding. We catch only quick glimpses of her near-nudity, as Mitch pulls her into the corridor and then, holding the door shut behind him with his hand, delivers swinging furious blows at the few birds that have escaped into the corridor.

MITCH Mother, get a rope!

LYDIA Oh, my God, look at her!

MITCH *(Shouting)* Get a rope!

She rushes off. He struggles grotesquely with the birds. There is a wild fury in him, and a methodical dedication. He will not allow them to defeat him. A large bird strikes his hand, knocking the club from it. The bird strikes at his face. He reaches out with his hands, grasping the bird, letting go of the doorknob. Another bird flutters into the corridor. Mitch in anger and desperation as he throttles the bird with his hands, almost tearing it to pieces. He reaches behind him to grab the doorknob again, and is immediately attacked by the other bird.

MITCH *(Yelling)* Mother! Hurry!

Lydia runs up the steps and into the corridor, carrying a heavy piece of rope. Mitch grabs the bird and hurls it angrily to the floor, killing it. Lydia is staring down at Melanie in terror and compassion. He takes the rope from her, loops it over the doorknob, pulls it taut across the hallway, and ties it to the banister, sealing the door. He turns immediately to Melanie, picks her up and carries her to the steps, Lydia following.

MITCH *(As they go downstairs)* Cathy! Get a blanket and some bandages!

CATHY *(At the foot of the stairs, on the verge of tears)* Is she all right?

Melanie is cradled against Mitch's shoulder, her face bleeding profusely.

MELANIE I'm fine, Cathy.

Mitch carries her into the living room, puts her down on the couch.

MITCH You're *not* fine. Just lie there and keep still.

Cathy rushes to them with a roll of bandages and a blanket. By the light of the lantern, Mitch drapes the blanket over Melanie and then begins unrolling the bandage. But his hands are trembling, and he drops it.

LYDIA Let me do that, Mitch. *(She picks up the bandage)*

MITCH I can handle it.

LYDIA I know you can. *(Her eyes meet his)* But I'd like to. *(He nods. Silently, she begins working on Melanie)*

MELANIE *(Weakly)* Please don't mess me up with bandages, Mrs. Brenner.

LYDIA Shhh. Shhh.

MELANIE Please.

But she begins cleaning the wounds, taping bandages over the cuts. The house is still. She works silently and quickly.

LYDIA *(As she works)* I'm not very good at this, Mitch.

MITCH You're doing fine.

LYDIA Apologizing, I mean. I want to . . . *(Pause)*

CATHY Listen!

Lydia raises her eyes. The room is silent. There is nothing to hear.

LYDIA They're gone. God have mercy, they're gone.

Mitch goes to the front door, and cautiously moves away the table and chair. He opens the door a crack. He sees THE YARD through the crack. Daylight is almost here.

There are no birds visible. Mitch opens the door wider. Dead birds are heaped against it, and the door is scarred and splintered. As he opens the door, more birds spill into the room, all dead. He steps out into the yard. Lydia is directly behind him.

EXT. THE HOUSE
a shambles, all the windows broken, the roof, the yard covered with dead birds of every imaginable size and color.

MITCH They're gone. The same pattern.

LYDIA But they'll be back.

MITCH We won't be here.

LYDIA Where can we go, Mitch? There's no place to go.

MITCH I want to try for San Francisco. There are buildings there. Steel and concrete.

LYDIA *(Shaking her head)* We'll never make it. They're probably all over the road.

MITCH We have to try it. *(A long silence)* We can't stay here. *(Silence)* Melanie needs help. *(Silence)* Mother, the house won't take another attack. They've already broken in upstairs!

LYDIA If . . . *(Pause)* If . . . when we get to San Francisco . . . *(Pause)* If they're already there?

MITCH They won't be.

LYDIA If they are?

MITCH We'll worry about that when we get there.

LYDIA I'm frightened, terribly frightened. I . . . I don't know what's out there, Mitch.

MITCH What do we have to know, Mother? We're all together, we all love each other, we all need each other. What else is there? Mother, I want us to stay alive!

LYDIA *(Nodding, then after a pause)* I started to say . . . inside . . .

MITCH You don't have to.

LYDIA I simply want to say I'm sorry.

Mitch nods briefly. He holds out his hand to her.

MITCH I think we'd better get started.

DISSOLVE TO:
EXT. THE BRENNER YARD
It is covered with eerie half-light that comes just before dawn, a light that persists throughout all of the following until the penultimate shot in the picture. The silence is deafening. There is not a bird in sight. The doors to Melanie's convertible are open and she and Mitch come out of the house together and he helps her to the car. He puts her in the backseat, tucks the blanket around her. In the background is the pickup truck, too small to hold all of them. Lydia comes to the door and quickly crosses the yard, not looking down at the dead birds all over the ground and windowsills. Cathy appears in the doorway to the house. She is carrying the cage of lovebirds. She hesitates just outside the doorway. She looks at Mitch. Mitch looks back at her, across the expanse of the desolated yard.

CATHY May I take them, Mitch? *(He does not answer. She continues looking at him)* They haven't harmed anyone.

LYDIA Take them.

MITCH *(With a slow nod)* We'll put them in the trunk, Cathy.

He takes the birds from her and goes to the back of the car. The CAMERA STAYS on Cathy, who gets into the car on the front seat. Mitch comes around the other side of the car, stops, and looks toward the trees, covered with waiting birds. Mitch gets into the car.

MITCH Be careful with that door.

Cathy closes the door gently, and almost soundlessly. Mitch does the same with his door.

MELANIE *(Weakly)* Mitch, if they hear the car starting . . . if they see movement . . .

MITCH We'll take it slow until we get to the main road. *(Pause)* Are you ready?

Mitch's hand turns the key. The motor springs to life.

INT. THE CAR
anticipation on all the faces.

MITCH All right. *(He takes a deep breath)* Here we go.

THE CAR
from the outside, as it creeps out of the yard. The bay is still, the road is still, the car makes barely a sound as it passes the gate and starts down the road.

THE ROAD AHEAD – THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD
as they begin driving slowly. The wires are down. A small fire is burning in the brush, where the wires made contact. The car continues to move. It turns the first bend in the road.

Melanie looks through the window. She gasps quickly.

A GROUP OF HERONS – AT WATER'S EDGE
standing, waiting silently.

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INT. THE CAR
as the tension starts to build.

MITCH Shhh. Shhhh.

They approach a derelict barge. It is covered with waiting seagulls. Lydia sees them. Her lip begins to tremble. Mitch turns toward the side of the road ahead.

AN OVERTURNED SCHOOL BUS
covered with waiting birds.

CATHY *(Whispering)* Mitch, let's turn back.

MITCH Shhh. Shhhh.

A ROADSIDE HOUSE
as the car passes. A barricade has been set up on the front porch, and a man is leaning over it, dead, a shotgun in his hands. The porch is covered with waiting birds. At the boarded window, we see a woman and a child peering through a gap.

THE CAR – BIRDS' POV
as it threads its way slowly and cautiously along the winding road to town. The birds are sitting on some of the still-standing wires, watching, waiting.

The car turns a bend in the road. There are thousands of birds ahead, on every gutted and smoldering rooftop, on every pole, on every fence.

LYDIA Mitch!

Mitch stops the car and looks ahead. The car is in the middle of the road. Ahead are the birds. Melanie, frightened, is trying not to reveal her fear.

MELANIE *Can* we turn back?

MITCH I . . . I don't think so. If we get through town, I think we'll be all right.

There is a long silence. It is Melanie who has the strongest reason for fearing the birds. It is Melanie, her fear growing, who makes the decision.

MELANIE Then go ahead, Mitch.

The car begins moving forward again at an excruciatingly slow rate of speed, into the town and the waiting birds.

Lydia turns to look out the window on her side. She sees a line of birds as the car moves past them slowly. She closes her eyes.

EXT. BRINKMEYER'S GENERAL STORE
through the windshield. The roof and sills are covered with birds. The window is smashed in, canned goods are strewn all over the sidewalk, bolts of cloth run in a riot from the open door and across the road, dead people are lying in the gutter. But in the hotel, we see some faces behind broken windows. The car approaches the stores opposite The Tides. The windows are all broken, and merchandise is lying on the sidewalk. Birds are everywhere, waiting. A dead man lies on the sidewalk, clutching a television set in his arms. Mitch, strained, looks at the road ahead, at a clear sky, a bird-free stretch.

MITCH *(Almost as a prayer)* Here we go. *(He rams down on the accelerator)*

EXT. THE CAR
as Mitch rams the accelerator to the floor and it zooms ahead in a burst of speed. THOUSANDS OF BIRDS take wing. MORE BIRDS take wing. MELANIE screams.

MELANIE Mitch!

MITCH wrenches at the wheel as the car turns a bend. We see THE ROAD AHEAD through the windshield, as a flock of birds take wing immediately ahead.

THE WINDSHIELD
from the inside, as birds spatter against it.

THE ROOF OF THE CAR
from the inside, as a beak slashes it, letting in a thin line of light.

Mitch wrenches at the wheel again, another bend.

The car navigates the sharp bends in the road as birds streak at it in straight lines.

LYDIA AND MELANIE
in the backseat as several slashes appear in the roof over their heads, letting in more light. More slashes, more light in scattered beams. Melanie's fear grows as the scattered light beams bring back the memory of the attic room and her flashlight battle with the owl. More slashes, building, the beak thrusts combining with the incoming beams of light in a weirdly horrifying way.

LYDIA *(Almost in prayer)* Dear God . . . dear God . . . please, please, what have we done? Please. *(And then in anger at the roof and the birds)* Can't they leave us alone? *(Shrieking it) Leave us alone!*

THE CAR INTERIOR
all the passengers, as the roof suddenly rips back.

BIRDS
from inside the car, hovering over it the moment the roof tears back.

MELANIE
This is too much for her. She screams at the sight of the birds, and then turns her face into Lydia's shoulder, as Lydia recognizes Melanie's need. She puts her arm around Melanie's shoulder and gently, soothingly, holds her close.

THE CAR
races along as the birds hover over it. Mitch, his face screwed in anguish, tears rolling down his cheeks, grips the wheel and hits the gas pedal.

THE OPEN CAR
streaming canvas ribbons behind it. It turns another bend in the road. The road ahead is arrow-straight, no curves. The car, in a burst of speed, hits the straight-away. It begins to outdistance the birds. The gap widens. A flock of birds attacks it from the side of the road, but it speeds into them and through them. The gap grows wider and wider. They are well ahead of the birds now.

LYDIA We're losing them.

Mitch only nods, his face streaming tears.

THE CAR – BIRDS' POV
as they fall way behind now, the car moving swiftly into the distance.

LYDIA AND MELANIE
on the backseat. Melanie begins sobbing in a sudden release of tension. Lydia, in compassion, tenderly cradles Melanie's head on her shoulder. Melanie, her eyes glistening, looks ahead through the windshield.

CATHY Mitch? Do . . . do you think they'll be all right? In the trunk? Can they breathe?

MITCH *(With the faintest smile)* I think they'll be all right, honey.

There is hope on their faces as the car streaks into the wind. Not a wild exuberance, but a relaxation of tension. They stare ahead through the windshield, and then they squint their eyes against the sudden sunrise ahead, and Mitch reaches up to turn down the visor.

MITCH It looks . . . it looks clear up ahead.

THE CAR
moving AWAY FROM THE CAMERA fast into the magnificent sunrise over the crest of the hills. Further and further into the distance it goes.

FADE OUT

THE END

The version of *The Birds* published here is Hunter's revised final draft, completed on December 20, 1961. The original script was a shooting script which called every shot and ran 189 pages.

The Birds

Release date: 1963

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock

Produced by Alfred Hitchcock

A Universal Pictures Release

PRINCIPAL CAST
Mitch Brenner: *Rod Taylor*
Melanie Daniels: *Tippi Hedren*
Lydia Brenner: *Jessica Tandy*
Annie Hayworth: *Suzanne Pleshette*
Cathy Brenner: *Veronica Cartwright*

Based on the short story *The Birds* by Daphne du Maurier.

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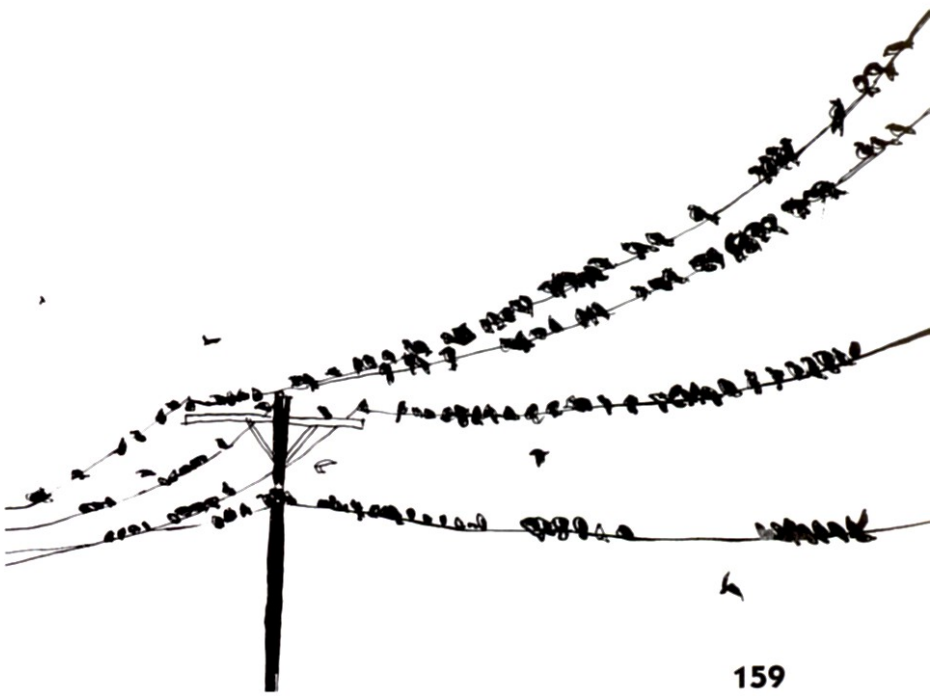
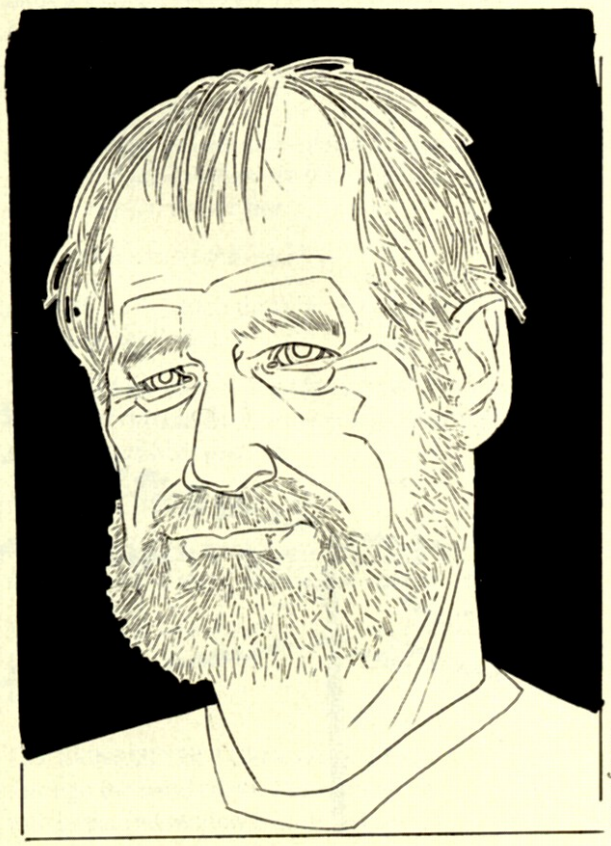


Writing *The Birds*

A Talk with Evan Hunter



David Johnson

Born in New York City, novelist and screenwriter Evan Hunter is also known as Ed McBain, the creator of tough, hard-hitting *policier* novels set in New York's 87th Precinct.

Hunter was already a serious, established novelist, much praised for *The Blackboard Jungle*, a realistic look at the New York City public school system (and the basis for the 1955 film starring Glenn Ford and Sidney Poitier), when he decided to write crime novels. Hunter's publisher was worried that his gritty genre writing would lessen his credibility with his literary audience, and so Hunter adopted the Ed McBain name. The McBain novels provided the basis for the films *Cop Hater* and *The Mugger*, both in 1958. Hunter landed his first screenplay assignment when he adapted his own novel *Strangers When We Meet*, released in 1961. John Frankenheimer made his debut as a director that same year with *The Young Savages*, an adaptation of Hunter's novel *A Matter of Conviction*, and Akira Kurosawa's great film *High and Low*, released in 1963 and starring Toshiro Mifune, was adapted from Hunter/McBain's *King's Ransom*.

The split in Hunter's work between high and low, between literary and popular, made him an inspired choice to work with director Alfred Hitchcock on *The Birds*. Hunter reveals that he envisioned the 1963 film as a screwball comedy that alternately teased and terrified. Under Hitchcock's influence, the result was a high-minded suspense film.

Hunter also wrote the novel *Last Summer*, which Eleanor Perry adapted for the film of the same title in 1969. In 1972, Hunter adapted his novel *Fuzz* for the film that starred Burt Reynolds and Raquel Welch. Currently, he divides his time between New York City and Connecticut, and continues to work as a novelist. His latest McBain novel, *The Last Dance*, is due out this December.

Daphne du Maurier's short story "The Birds" was set in England during World War II and is possibly inspired by wartime bombing. In the film, this story is transplanted to a sleepy California fishing village, in a country where there wasn't any war.

Yes, and there was even a line in the script, where they're ridiculing Melanie in the Tides Restaurant and someone asks what she would call the bird attacks, and she says, "A war." And they reply, "A bird war?" I had always wanted to do a sequel to *The Birds*, I tried to sell it to Universal. Melanie Griffith *[Tippi Hedren's daughter]* would be getting married to Tom Cruise or Tom Hanks or whoever the hell, in the same farmhouse where the first bird attack took place. Tippi Hedren would be married to Rod Taylor now, and the wedding would take place there, and there would be new bird attacks. Everyone would get killed except Melanie and the leading man, and they would start a cross-country journey and find the nation devastated by war.

Which is more like the du Maurier story—apocalyptic.

It would be a parable about nuclear war. The bird attacks would

have been a parallel for nuclear war. One of the most spectacular scenes in the movie is when the birds are flying in formation over the town and they start peeling off like fighter planes, like dive bombers. Nobody ever questioned how Hitch got that shot. Was he in a plane, saying, okay, birds, now get ready, dive?

How did he get that shot?

It was animated.

There were mechanical birds, stuffed birds, cell animation birds, real birds, trained birds, even chickens painted brown.

That's because we didn't have the *Star Wars* technology they have today. If we had, we really would have threatened people. Or maybe not. Maybe the crudeness of it, the jerry-built feeling of it, the fact that we were dealing with real stuff instead of computer-generated stuff, made it seem more real than *Star Wars*.

The script has a beautiful rhythm to it. The lulls, the leisure of the repartee scenes punctuated by machine-gun bird attacks—the shape of the script translated very well to film.

We discussed the tempo of the script a lot, and the amount of time between the attacks and the intensity of the attacks. The attacks keep getting more intense and more vicious as the movie goes on. We spent a lot of time trying to figure out that pacing.

The characters are revealed by how they react to the birds—they evolve with each bird attack. It's an interesting way to learn about people, which is why the scene on the hill at the children's party, where we get the revelations about Melanie's past, seemed so misplaced.

It's so offensive, I know. It's not in the script. I didn't write that scene. But that's a Hollywood thing that they do. You hear that all the time—what's her backstory, or what's his backstory? As if you can't come to any situation, any scene, without carrying emotional baggage with you. Instead of just coming into a scene, and letting what happens in a scene just *happen* to you.

So why do you think Hitchcock decided to add a scene that revealed her trauma at her mother abandoning her?

Boy, I don't know. He was a smart fellow. I think it all gets back to him looking for respectability, looking for characters who weren't as shallow as the ones in his earlier films. His characters were surface characters that you could read without going too deep.

At the time you worked with him, Hitchcock already had a long career and was known for a certain kind of film. At this same time, François Truffaut was mounting a campaign from France that everyone should take Hitchcock seriously as an auteur, and to take the genre he worked in seriously. Did that influence Hitchcock's thinking when he made The Birds*?*

I think something else may have influenced him. *Psycho* was a huge success, but it was not the kind of film Hitch normally made. *Psycho* was a screamer, people went in there and they were screaming every time a murder took place. I don't know how much he was influenced by wanting them to scream in this one as well, but at the same time not wanting them to scream. In many respects, *Psycho* was a horror film.

Except it has an ironic touch that was humorous at times. And those seemed to be two of his loves—humor and horror. Your original idea for The Birds *script was that you would try and merge a suspense story with a humor story so that people would be seduced into laughing, and then, the way you put it, was that they'd "choke on their own laughter."*

[Hunter makes choking noise] Yeah.

So Hitchcock ran with that idea?

He loved it, yeah. But I puzzle over this—why didn't it work? I mean, why didn't the *idea* work. Maybe the movie works, I don't know. I think it was that Hitchcock and I had two different senses of humor, and maybe he missed my sense of humor. So the humor scenes, on the screen, kind of fall flat. The scene where Melanie's

> *"When the birds are in formation, was Hitchcock in a plane saying, okay, birds, dive!"*

asking the postal clerk questions—I thought it read funny and it should have been funny. But on the screen, it wasn't. The man in the shop was a good actor, but I think Hitch shot a lot of this stuff as if she were from Mars. Everyone was looking at her as if she had a purple leg. Very peculiar. Their reactions to her were so strange.

Doesn't she represent the big city, and something alien?

Yeah, but it was wrong. Because Bodega Bay isn't a hick town, people from San Francisco go through there all the time.

You had a scene that I thought was a perfect example of "choking on laughter," where Melanie starts talking about how perhaps what's happening is a little bird rebellion. Mitch and Melanie theorize about why the birds are attacking, they tell funny stories until it's not funny anymore. That scene illustrated perfectly what you were trying to do. Why was that cut?

That was a key scene. I don't know why Hitch cut it. I think he shot it, and maybe it just didn't work. Or maybe he felt it was redundant, and since we were going to have the scene in the Tides Restaurant later, we didn't need the scene where they try to explain the attacks. But the scene served a double purpose because it was a love scene, and an essential love scene. Without it, we don't know what's going on between the two of them.

In the film, you realize suddenly that they've made a decision to become lovers, but it must have happened off-screen somewhere. So by the time you see them kiss in the film, it's the kind of kiss that's as if they've been married fifty years.

It's a peck on the cheek! He says, goodbye, darling, do you need anything, should I pick up something at the grocery? That also was amazing to me, that Hitch didn't get the kind of heat between them that he normally got between his leading players.

Do you think that was partly from his disappointment that these weren't stars like Grace Kelly and Cary Grant?

Cary Grant was Hitch's own decision, because he just wouldn't give Cary his money. Cary wanted 50% of the movie, and Hitch would not give it to him. I'm remembering now something that happened—we were in the Sunroom at Universal, which is an executive sort of dining room and all the stars go there, the directors and everyone, for lunch. The place was buzzing and there were a lot of people in costumes because they were shooting, and directors and producers, and Hitch and I were at a table. And Cary

"If you set up a party outdoors with balloons, you know there are going to be birds coming!"

Grant walked in. He stopped at the *maître d'*s podium and he said a few words to him and the room went dead silent. This is the first time I've ever seen this happen—and I've been around a lot of stars—but I have never seen this in my life—dead silence! And the *maître d'* led him across the room to his table, and every eye in the room was on Cary Grant, and then he sat down, and conversation began again. I almost expected to hear applause! *[laughs]* But the other thing was, he didn't say hello to Hitch. This is what reminded me of the story. He didn't say, hi, Hitch, or anything like that. He walked right by our table.

You open your book, Me and Hitch, *with a great Hitchcock story—when you visited him on the set of* Alfred Hitchcock Presents, *and he walked around talking to your wife and ignored the fact that the block of ice for the actor's next shot was melting. It perfectly captured his orneriness, his focus on the girl . . .*

And his indifference to the actor.

And creating suspense, allowing this tension to build on his own set. To me, it just encapsulated the Hitchcock persona.

And I was getting a little nervous, too, because I was aware that the ice was melting, and that my wife was the cause of it. Because he wasn't paying any attention to it.

In terms of the script, his method of working with you was to say, "Tell me the story so far?"

"Tell me the story." In the beginning, I came out with some ideas and they got shot down. He had some ideas and I shot them down. We essentially started from scratch. I guess we spent a week just noodling around.

Film theorists have read a lot of symbology into this film, analyzing what it all means. Did you and Hitchcock discuss what the deeper meanings were?

You don't see any of that in the screenplay, do you?

No. Camille Paglia, for instance, wrote a book about The Birds. *She calls* The Birds *"a perverse ode to woman's sexual glamour," and yet to her it's also about the domestication of women. She finds symbols at every turn, especially sexual.*

She's got her own agenda. That's three different agendas now—mine, Hitch's, and hers. She's finding things that I know weren't in my head, and I doubt sincerely that they were in Hitch's head.

Federico Fellini called the film an "apocalyptic poem."

Yeah, I think he's right. I didn't realize he was such a fan of the film. I always wanted to work with him, because to me he was the screen's only novelist. He never sacrificed honesty for the sake of movie tricks. This is the same in many Italian films—very often you see a scene begin where you think it's going to get ugly, and it doesn't. It stays in a friendly family kind of way and it explains that this is the way it is, it doesn't have to turn into a rape scene or whatever. He did that, and just explored characters so beautifully and took his time doing it. He's a novelist, but he was working with film.

So during that early work on The Birds *script, you originally had an idea that maybe this story needed a murder mystery?*

Yeah, but not quite a murder mystery. I thought maybe she should be a reporter. Where that idea lingers is that her father owns the newspaper. The idea was that she could be a reporter coming up to investigate mysterious bird attacks.

Melanie almost stalks Mitch, she rockets after him in her fast car, she's aggressive. It's masculine, but she's got coiffeured hair and high heels—it's a fascinating gender-bender.

Except that I wouldn't have dressed her that way. Not to go up to Bodega Bay. They dressed her as if she were from Atlanta, Georgia. All she needed was the little white gloves! But she's from San Francisco, and she's pretty hip, she's been all over the world. She's riding in an open car. I would have put her in blue jeans and a sweater. That to me would have been the vision of the character, not the mink coat. I mean, that's Hitch's.

That's his personal fetish, so he turned her into that even though it wasn't right for the story. But somehow it works on another level because it almost becomes surrealist. But getting back to the newspaper office, what was the importance of that scene, and why was it cut?

The scene in the newspaper office was designed to show Melanie as a loving daughter with a good relationship with both parents—certainly not the troubled woman we see later in the scene on the dunes, which was added by Hitch. The scene in the office reveals Melanie's sense of humor—obviously influenced by her father—and sets up the comic tone for the entire lovebird odyssey that follows. I can't imagine why this scene was cut.

Then again, Hitch cut the entire love story between Melanie and Mitch, so perhaps he felt it unnecessary to show her as someone interesting and amusing and intelligent and charming—in short, someone with whom a man might very well fall in love.

Hitchcock talks about never wanting there to be what he calls "no-scene scenes." What did he mean by that?

Scenes that did not advance either character or plot. That's a valid criticism. If a scene does neither of those things, then it shouldn't be in the movie. I forget which scenes he objected to as being "no-scene scenes."

In one interview Hitchcock said, why show Melanie go buy a nightgown when having her show up at the boardinghouse with a brown bag is instantly interesting. It becomes: what's in the brown bag?

See, I thought it was a funny scene, buying a nightgown and ending up with this little cotton nightgown, this sophisticated woman in this little town. That may have been it. There was another scene he objected to, where he said: that's the scene where they're putting on their hats already, they're leaving.

But even if a scene advances plot or character, it should also have suspense built into it?

Well, audiences were, even then, pretty educated. They would have been prepared for weeks before they went to see the film, they knew this was about birds attacking. So anything we did between bird attacks had to be fairly interesting or they wouldn't sit still, they'd want to get out of the theater. They wouldn't wait for the birds, they'd say, the hell with this, and off they'd go.

So the suspense became not what *was going to happen, but* when *it was going to happen.*

Exactly. We knew what was going to happen, more or less. We knew there was going to be another bird attack. Look, if you set up a birthday party outdoors with balloons and everything, you know there are going to be birds coming! *[laughs]* It's not going to end with cutting the cake!

Every scene leading up to the first attack has a bird reference, or someone looks to the sky—you carefully kept the birds . . .

Alive. That was the most difficult part of the script, to keep interest there before the first bird attack. This is why I thought of the idea of a romantic comedy, a screwball comedy. So that the viewer would be more interested in the love affair than when the first bird attack is coming.

You were looking at the '40s screwball comedies of Hepburn and Grant?

Those were the models I was thinking of.

In those movies, the characters are very specifically not deep. There's no backstory or traumatic reasons for behavior.

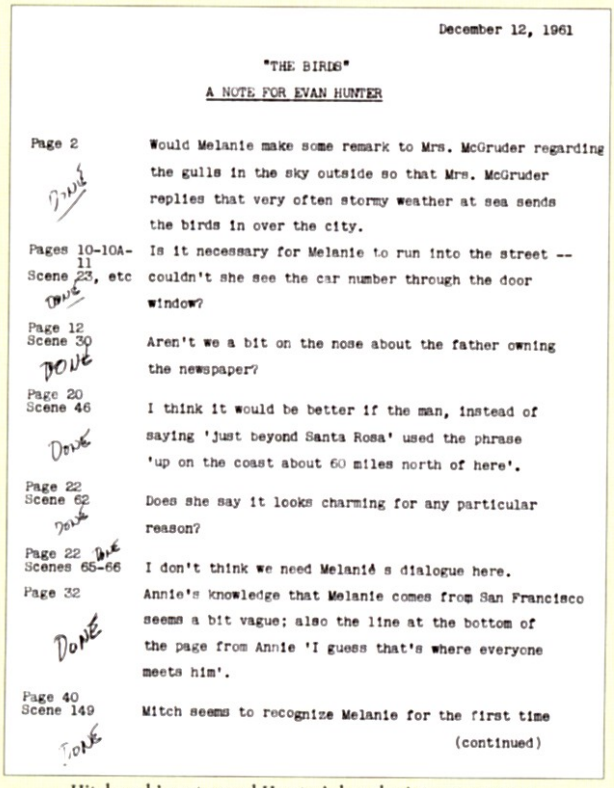
No, they're surface characters, sitcom characters. You know them *[snaps fingers]* in a flash.

So you were interested in characters like that, but at the same time there was a pull to deepen the characters, and that was coming from writers that Hitchcock had shown the script to?

He showed the finished script to V.S. Pritchett. He showed the script to Hume Cronyn, which pissed me off, I must tell you.

Because he was married to Jessica Tandy, who was playing the mother in the movie?

And he's an actor! An actor?! *[laughs]* God Almighty! Also, his view of the script was biased, he wanted to enlarge Jessica's role in it, he wanted her to have a better role. And I know Hitch showed the script to Pritchett, and I think he got comments from both of them. I know there was a long, long letter from Hume Cronyn, which I could not use in my book because it does not belong to me, where he talks all about it. Hitch wrote four or five pages of notes to me when we had what we thought was the final draft of the script, explaining all the things that he felt were wrong with the script. I have the notes, and I have check marks all alongside, or the word "done" checked off. *[see above and following page]*



December 12, 1961

"THE BIRDS"

A NOTE FOR EVAN HUNTER

Page 2 — Would Melanie make some remark to Mrs. McGruder regarding the gulls in the sky outside so that Mrs. McGruder replies that very often stormy weather at sea sends the birds in over the city. — DONE

Pages 10-10A-11 Scene 23, etc — Is it necessary for Melanie to run into the street -- couldn't she see the car number through the door window? — DONE

Page 12 Scene 30 — Aren't we a bit on the nose about the father owning the newspaper? — DONE

Page 20 Scene 46 — I think it would be better if the man, instead of saying 'just beyond Santa Rosa' used the phrase 'up on the coast about 60 miles north of here'. — Done

Page 22 Scene 62 — Does she say it looks charming for any particular reason? — done

Page 22 Scenes 65-66 — I don't think we need Melanie's dialogue here. — DONE

Page 32 — Annie's knowledge that Melanie comes from San Francisco seems a bit vague; also the line at the bottom of the page from Annie 'I guess that's where everyone meets him'. — DONE

Page 40 Scene 149 — Mitch seems to recognize Melanie for the first time — done

(continued)

Hitchcock's notes and Hunter's handwritten responses.

Who wrote the scene on the hill, about how Melanie had a mother that ran off?

I think Hitch wrote it. I'll tell you what the clue is: "She ran off with a hotel man from the East." That's so singularly British that it had to have been Hitch who wrote it. And it doesn't mean anything.

I guess you're just lucky that those end lines didn't get in, where Hitchcock wanted Melanie to say in the car at the very end, "Mother, I want you, come back!"

I would have absolutely vomited if I saw that, a flashback to the

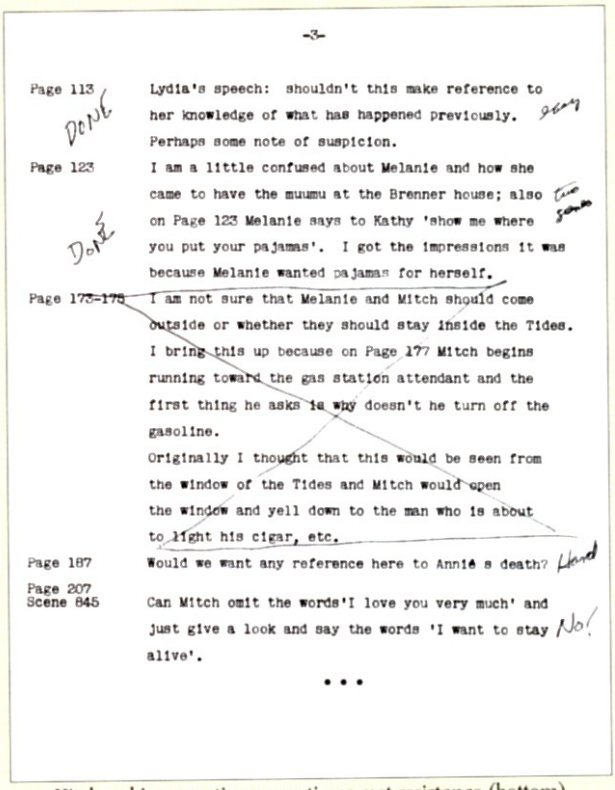
mother she never had. I mean, that scene at the children's picnic is so inept, I cannot tell you how inept it is. No line of dialogue logically or rationally follows the line of dialogue preceding it. It's as if two people are having two separate conversations with their own agendas in them. And it's so wrong for her. To try and suddenly whitewash this girl? It negates her whole character!

Whereas she's already deepening naturally, because she's being challenged for the first time, through adversity, as would happen in a war.

And she's away from her father, she's away from the bosom of her family, she's in what for her is a wilderness. Also, because there wasn't any attraction between them, you got only the anger between them. You got Mitch behaving like really something of a prig about her and her activities. Instead of that he's attracted to her. This is his way of flirting. And her way of flirting is to buy the birds. They're flirting with each other, that's what it should have been in the beginning of the movie.

I think that does come across. It comes across that she's a game player and that he rises to the challenge. That scene in the pet store has suggestions of everything that will play out in the rest of the film. Everything they say to each other is kind of a lie.

Innuendo, yeah.



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Page 113 — Lydia's speech: shouldn't this make reference to her knowledge of what has happened previously. Perhaps some note of suspicion.

Page 123 — I am a little confused about Melanie and how she came to have the muumu at the Brenner house; also on Page 123 Melanie says to Kathy 'show me where you put your pajamas'. I got the impressions it was because Melanie wanted pajamas for herself.

Page 173-178 — I am not sure that Melanie and Mitch should come outside or whether they should stay inside the Tides. I bring this up because on Page 177 Mitch begins running toward the gas station attendant and the first thing he asks is why doesn't he turn off the gasoline.

Originally I thought that this would be seen from the window of the Tides and Mitch would open the window and yell down to the man who is about to light his cigar, etc.

Page 187 — Would we want any reference here to Annie's death?

Page 207 Scene 845 — Can Mitch omit the words 'I love you very much' and just give a look and say the words 'I want to stay alive'.

• • •

Hitchcock's suggestions sometimes met resistance (bottom).

Another wonderful scene is the Tides Restaurant, between attacks. They talk about how birds of different species never mix, and here you have all these "birds" of different species, all these different types of humans, mixing.

That's the best scene. It may not be the best scene in the movie, because there are very exciting scenes that Hitch brought to it, but it's the best scene I wrote.

Sometimes birds attack after an intense emotion, as if manifestations of some human fear. Was that part of your design?

No, it wasn't on my part. Maybe Hitch put it in as a thread in the movie. Or maybe it was unconscious. Maybe it was like a musical where you build a scene to a song. The scenes built to bird attacks. Like the climax of a scene in a musical is a song. It's not what the characters say—you're leading to a song. And here, maybe the climax of each scene was the bird attack.

Like a crescendo. That's a great way to put it. While working on the story, didn't Hitchcock question everything so that later the audience wouldn't?

He was contradictory about that in a way, because he always used to say that it goes by too fast for you to notice things. At the same time, this was at a time when we could not replay, we did not have video recorders in our homes. For the Academy Awards, when I have to watch movies, I'll say, just a minute, I missed it, what did she say? I turn it back, and I sometimes play it four or five times. But we couldn't do that back then. You had to go see the movie again if you missed something. But Hitch nonetheless insisted that everything be spelled out for the audience, that it made sense. So that you couldn't drive a Mack truck through it later on.

This morning, watching the film again, I played it back at a certain moment—in the script, it's clear that Melanie sacrifices herself for the family when she shuts the door in the room upstairs, but in the movie she falls into it by accident. Why did he take out the idea of her finally doing something selfless?

I don't know. That was a traumatic scene anyway for Tippi, and it must have been very trying for Hitch as well. They were throwing birds at her, real ones. But the birds were not stupid animals, so they wouldn't hit her. They'd stop before they hit, they'd stop with their wings, and they'd stop their own flailing motion. But that's not the impression you got when you were watching it. And it certainly must have been frightening for her to have these birds hurled at her from off-camera.

Nowadays you couldn't do that. There'd be all kinds of reasons why you couldn't hurl birds at someone's face.

The animal rights people were all over the set. Hitch was very careful about not showing any dead birds. You may have noticed that you never see anyone taking offensive action against the birds. It's always defensive action. The one time, when they find Annie dead, and Mitch picks up a rock and is about to throw it at the crows, Melanie stops him. And we couldn't show the scene where Mitch was sweeping up the birds.

When Mitch is burning the birds, and Melanie and Mitch see each other across the yard and he's with the trail of smoke, that's a very beautiful moment in the script.

Now you just see him in the yard, you don't know what he's doing.

Were most scenes trimmed because of Hitchcock's fear that people would just be restless for more bird attacks?

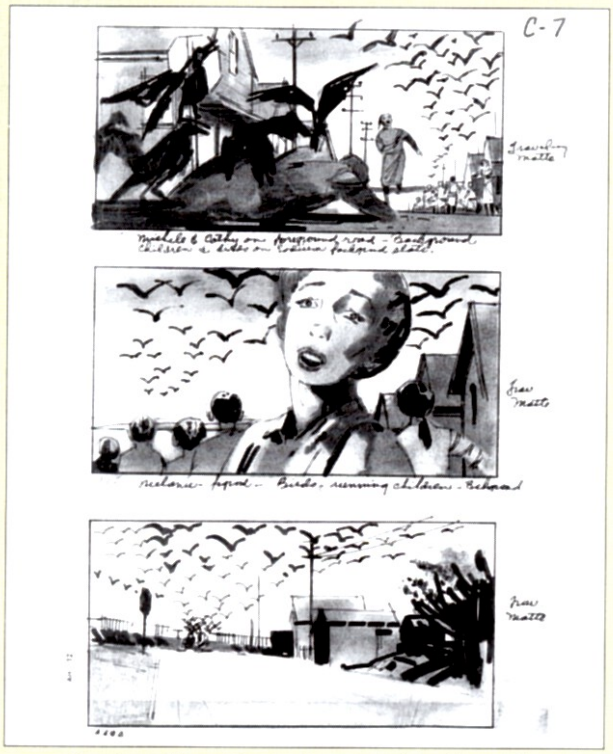
But he gave so much time to scenes that I felt were, even reading the script, not very good scenes. I don't think the first scene with Annie and Melanie is a good scene. It's not a good "girl talk" scene. I've written better women's scenes.

I like their scenes very much. They're two women sitting around discussing the terrain, the "men war."

Well, that's what I would have hoped. It's "men over lunch," is what the scene should have been, because at any restaurant in New York, you sit down at a table and the women at the next table are talking about men. "And then he said . . ." "I can't believe it . . ." It's amazing *[laughs]*, it really is. So I wanted it to be a "men over lunch" scene, but I never got that scene right.

It's wonderful, though, because of the levels of the coyness and the competition between the two of them. There were a few things that were trimmed from the script that explained why Annie Hayworth is in this small town. In the film, you wonder—is she a masochist, to just lurk near her ex-lover?

There's a wonderful reason for her . . . I love that stuff that was cut from the script, cut from the movie, talking about why she left San Francisco. She was talking to some guy one day, and just realized that this was not the guy for her. He says something to her while they're out for dinner, and she suddenly realizes this is not what I want, I want to get out of this city, this is absurd.



Storyboard from *The Birds*, Universal Studios, 1963.

In the script, you show it's her love of teaching that keeps her in Bodega Bay. But that's not in the film, so you end up wondering what is this tough, bohemian-looking San Francisco woman doing being a schoolmarm before her time? There's that line in your book where Suzanne Pleshette [who plays Annie] *says, "Hitchcock gave Tippi a mink and me a—"*

"—me a *schmatte*. A rag. He gives her a mink, and me he gives a housedress and wedgies." *[laughs]* That's exactly what she said, but I couldn't use that in my book because no one would know what a *schmatte* was. *[laughs]* But really, she did look as if she was wearing a housedress and wedgies. First time I met her in my life, and she said to me, how do you like it? The blond he gives a mink, me he gives a *schmatte* and wedgies. *[laughs]* She was a nice lady, I really liked her a lot.

Could we talk about the ending? There's a certain sense that this film has an unresolved ending, but not so in the script. In the script, you have a final attack, with the imagery of the shredding of the car roof and the light pouring in. It's almost cathedral-like, a sense of hope and doom at the same time.

You know the whole purpose of that roof, the whole reason she's driving a convertible is for that canvas top, for the last scene in the film. And yeah, I really visualized that one, I think it would have been beautifully shot, with the light splintering in and the roof going back and them in the middle. It would have been horrible, people would have been screaming in terror, really.

And yet they make it through.

For a very real reason. The road straightens out. The birds are coming straight on a winding road, and the road straightens out and of course a car is faster than birds, and *[whistles]* off it goes.

Why did he cut that last scene?

I would suspect he was getting tired. I think that this scene would have been two months of shooting. With all the fancy footwork with the birds, it would have required animation, and the whole thing with the car and interiors and exteriors with the birds hovering over the car would have been hard, hard, hard stuff.

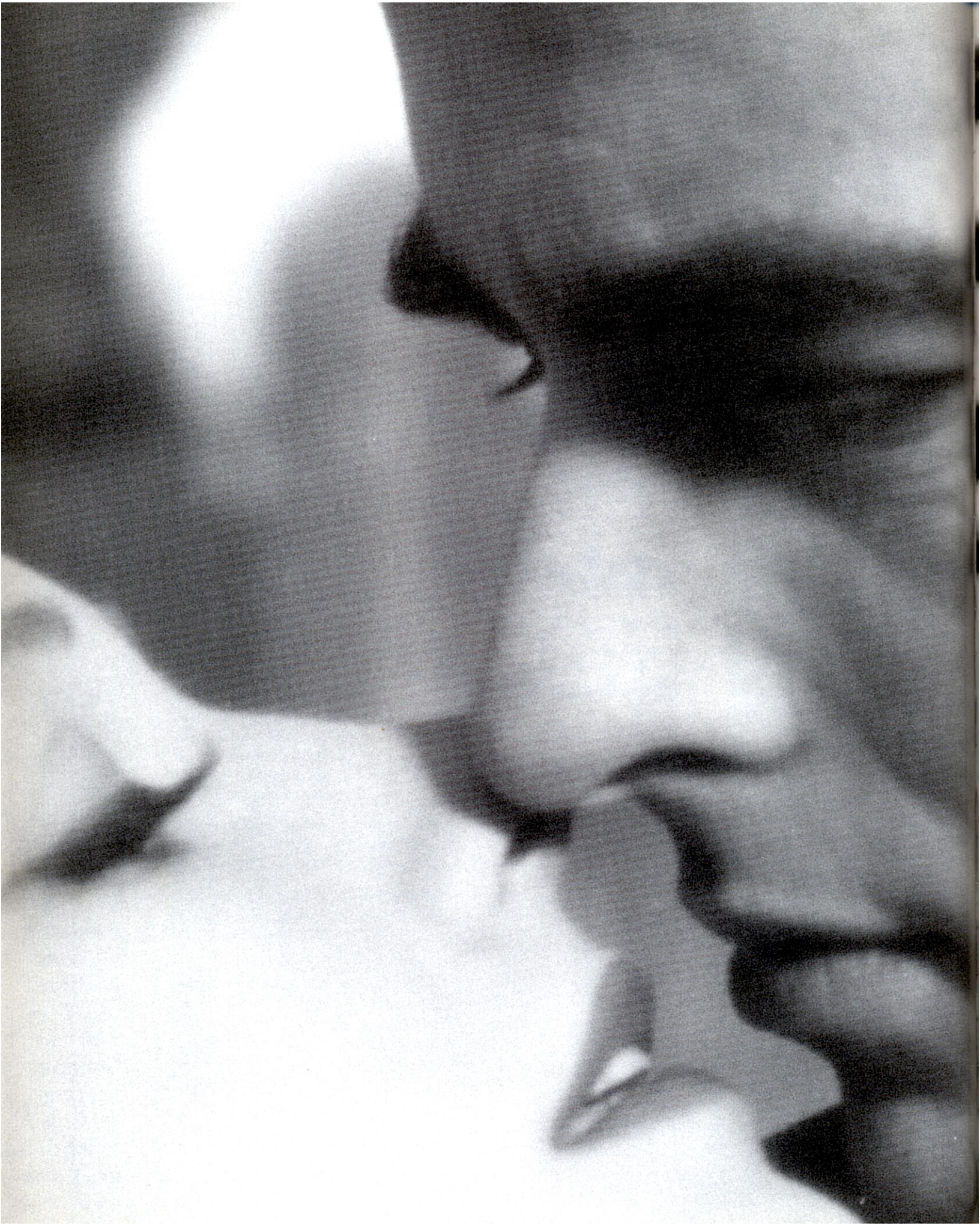
In the end, they just creep away. It ended up looking cowardly, ending with a whimper instead of a bang. Was there a notion that maybe the birds were in the next town, and beyond?

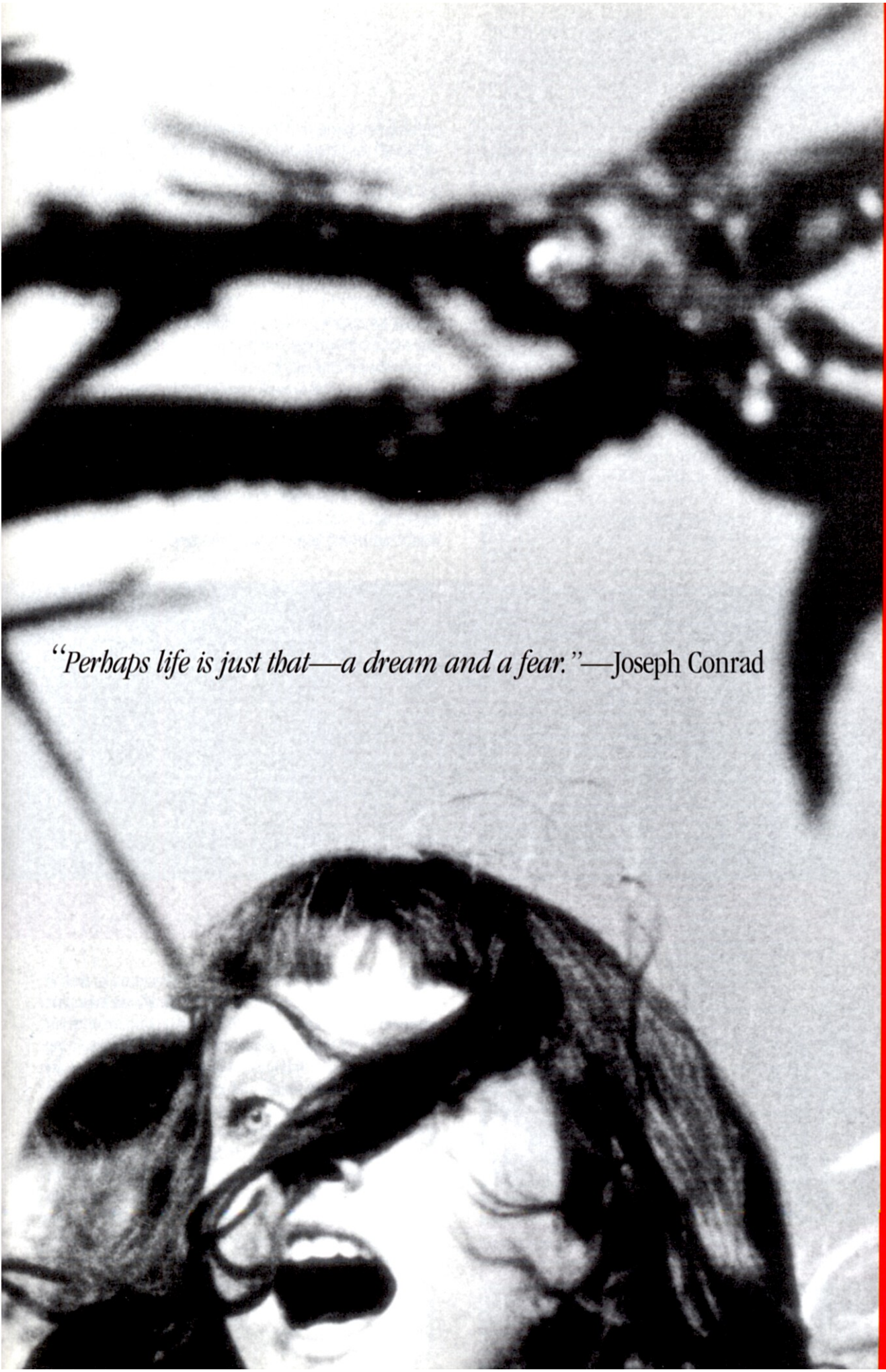
Yeah, in San Francisco, maybe. When she says, do you think they'll be in San Francisco? and he says, I don't think so, honey—that's supposed to mean, I don't know, God help us if they are!

I know Hitchcock liked audiences to instantly identify with the leads, but Tippi Hedren was a brand-new actress. I read somewhere that he added that little sequence of the wolf whistle at the beginning because she had just done a TV commercial where she was whistled at in the street. He copied that so people would be like, oh yeah, the girl from the commercial.

Oh, sure, the girl from the commercial. I mean, who ever saw that commercial? Tippi's mother maybe—there's my daughter! I mean that's absurd, if he was going for the reference. I didn't

Continued on page 190





"*Perhaps life is just that—a dream and a fear.*"—Joseph Conrad

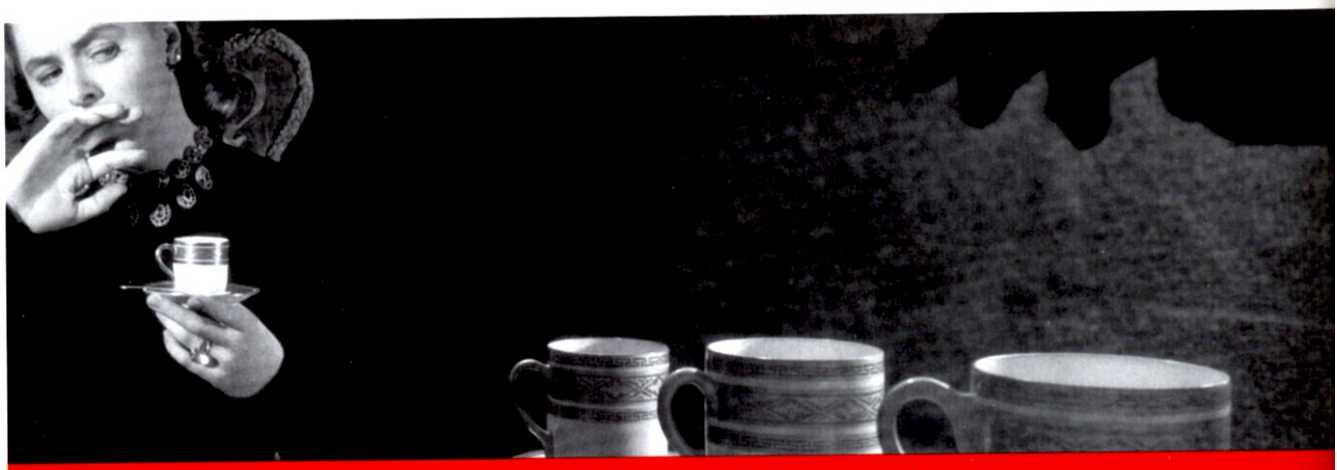
Love, Dreams & Hitchcock

By Donald Spoto

*

"At night you sleep your untroubled, ordinary little sleep, filled with peaceful, stupid dreams. And I brought you nightmares." With icy calm, those words are spoken by that attractive, well-dressed sociopath, Uncle Charlie (Joseph Cotten), in Alfred Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943).

The director, whose centenary we mark this summer, could have said the same words to us, for his films are nothing if not filmed dreams—a series of serenely coherent images, some of them suspenseful, all of them in the service of the great tradition of the romance. This is often a surprise to people, but when you stop to think about it, the Hitchcock canon is indeed a vast array of fifty-three romances: stories of love withheld, love denied, love derailed, love lost, love longed for, love regained. The espionage plot, the murderous impulse, the betrayal, the theft, the kidnapping, the flawed vision—all these are what he called MacGuffins, mere story pretexts to examine the real core, the deepest logic of the film. And in every case, this is some variation on the love story. This deserves a brief introductory comment.



Above, Ingrid Bergman, *Notorious*, RKO, 1946. *"Dream-tales full of treachery and riddled with anxiety."*
Previous pages, Montgomery Clift & Anne Baxter, *I Confess*, Warner Bros. 1953. Little girl, *The Birds*, Universal, 1963.

Shadow of a Doubt (to stay with our example) is a love story; it even has a creepy sort of wedding scene between uncle and niece, as he places a ring on her finger and reminds her of their spiritual kinship. The film is a moral thriller in which a naïve young girl also named Charlie (Teresa Wright) learns about the mixed blood (that is, the dark impulse) she has inherited, the uneasy, common humanity that links her to her demented Uncle Charlie.

Psycho (1960) is a love story, too. The life of Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins) is destroyed by the illusion that a twisted, defensive love can cancel out the effects of a lunatic crime and keep alive a dead person. And the life of Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) is destroyed by the illusion that money will finally solve her lover's financial problems and set them both free. A Hitchcock love story may be unlike any other love story you encounter in movies, but love stories they are.

Like all the Hitchcock masterworks, *Shadow of a Doubt* and *Psycho* have a dream-like quality. Smooth Uncle Charlie—so polite, so handsome, so presentable, so *likable*—is a serial killer. Norman Bates, that painfully shy young man who seems so suffocated by his mother, is a madman, too. Appearances are, as usual in the Hitchcock filmography, no clear clues to reality.

It's the same in our dreams and nightmares. Love seems strange in dreams. There are sudden transitions from one place to another, the beloved refuses to act and react as we expect. The familiar place seems somehow different, and time slips and slides. Places bend, change shape. People enter our dreams, become other people, vanish, emerge again. Movies are like that. We're here, we're there, time is elastic.

No one knew this better than Alfred Hitchcock. He often compared his films to dreams: *North by Northwest* (1959), for example, he described as one long dream-fantasy of absurdity, a tale of what happens to a Madison Avenue businessman (Cary Grant) who loses virtually every security. The crop-dusting sequence is right from the world of dreamscape: look at the broad daylight pursuit of a man by a deadly biplane, with nowhere to hide but a cornfield. Is this nightmare or what? But *North by Northwest* is a love story. Our ultimate concern isn't for the darned microfilm (who cares?): it's about Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint getting together despite her betrayal of him (an action typical of a Hitchcock blonde).

Similarly, think of the demented carousel in *Strangers on a Train* (1951), suddenly cranked up from normal to tornado-like speed as Guy Haines (Farley Granger) and Bruno Anthony (Robert Walker) fight to the death beneath the hooves of painted wooden horses. Hitch knew what he was doing in transforming Patricia Highsmith's novel of a lethal gay courtship into a fight to the finish; he has turned it into a love story, with Freudian images strewn like confetti.

Even more hallucinatory is that great poem of his late career, *The Birds* (1963). The film is a series of dialogues between people, classic exchanges in which they discuss their fear of being abandoned—and after each dialogue, there's a bird attack. Nightmare imagery, all of it: those are such cute little sparrows!

Sometimes Hitchcock literally gives us his character's dreams. For *Spellbound* (1945), he brought in artist Salvador Dalí for the sequence in which a masked man turns over huge, blank playing cards while enormous eyes stare from painted draperies; and at the next moment, another man, tiny and helpless, is overwhelmed as he flees from the shadow of an enormous pursuing bird. *[see endpage]*

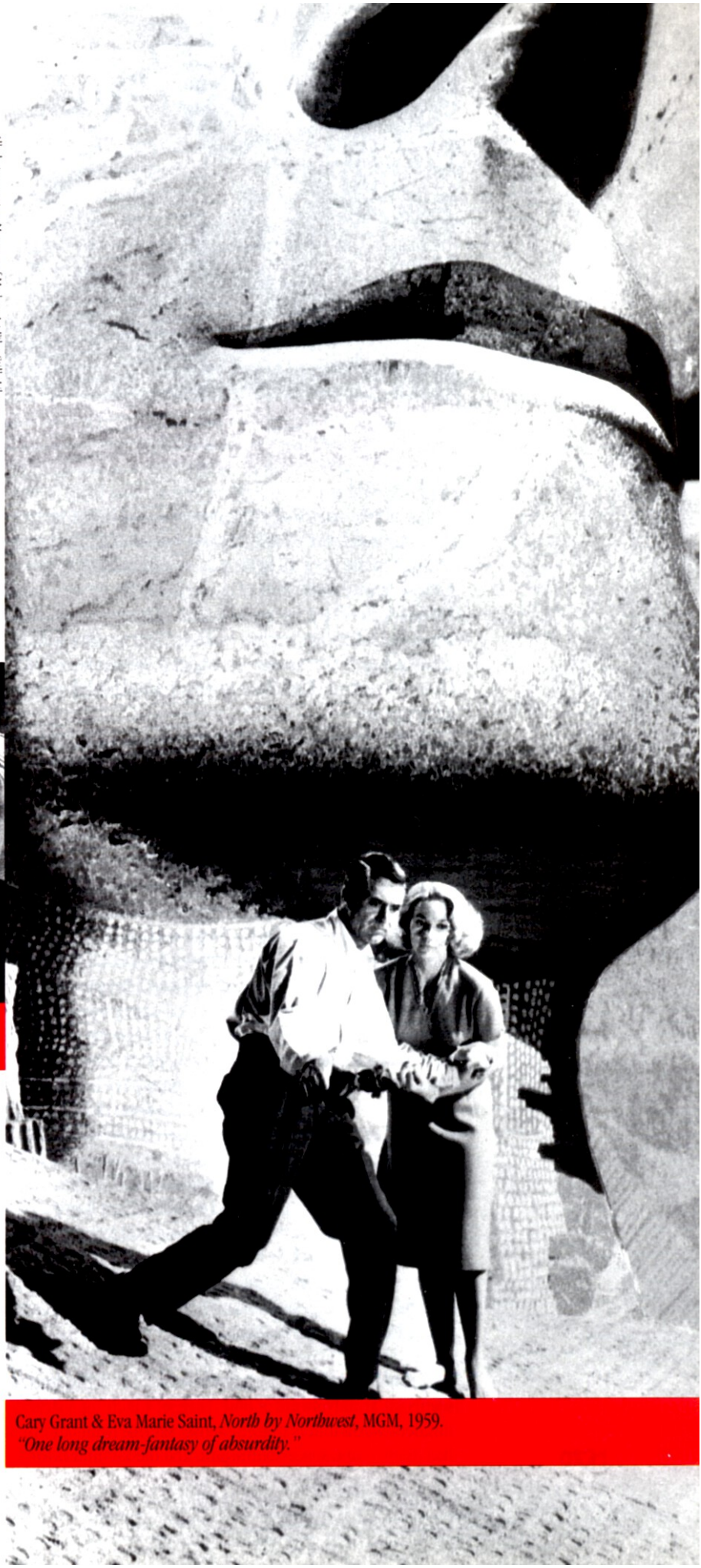
And it's likely that few who saw it can ever forget the haunting nightmare sequence in *Vertigo* (1958), in which the breakdown of Scottie Ferguson (James Stewart) is precipitated by a dream in which guilt and love collide with longing for death, where he may be united with his beloved. This extraordinary episode takes us into Scottie's haunted mind: we see Madeleine's nosegay turn to a crude, animated prop whose

Anthony Perkins & Alfred Hitchcock on the set of *Psycho*, Paramount, 1960. *"We watch Norman watching and stare* with *him."*

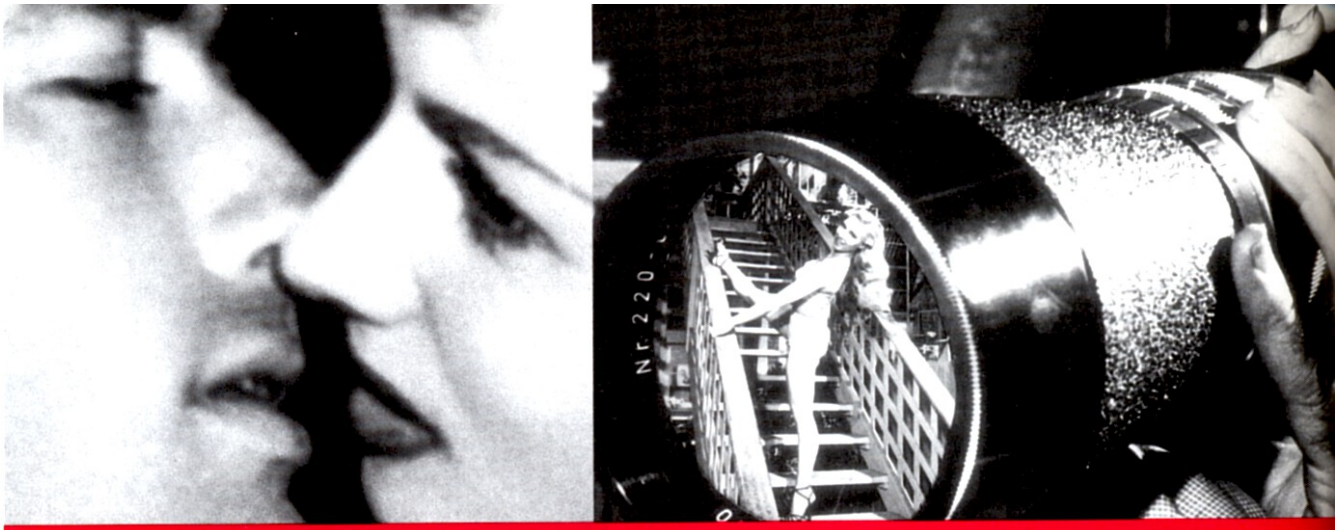
flowers are torn away. Then, in a remarkable moment of subconscious awareness, he stands, in his dream, near a window (clearly in the room where the inquest into her death had just been held). There, Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore) embraces a woman who resembles the portrait of Carlotta Valdes, and who turns coldly toward Scottie. The dream continues as Scottie walks down a long corridor, thus enacting the dream Madeleine had described—and then suddenly it is the Mission Dolores cemetery garden and, with arms spread (the gesture repeated exactly in the last shot of the film), he throws himself into a grave. Scottie awakens from this dream, eyes wild with terror, staring directly out at us.

From here, there's a straight line to *Marnie* (1964), wherein a childhood trauma leads the title character (played by Tippi Hedren) to a restless and emotionally empty adulthood

All photos courtesy Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Library.



Cary Grant & Eva Marie Saint, *North by Northwest*, MGM, 1959. *"One long dream-fantasy of absurdity."*



Left: Gregory Peck & dream girl, *Spellbound*, Selznick, 1945. Right: James Stewart, *Rear Window*, Paramount, 1954.
"It's in romance that the theme of watching is italicized—just as in dreams."

that can be healed only by confronting a long-buried memory that has tried for years to surface in her dreams. The breakthrough comes in meeting the past as a hallucinatory kind of dream-remembrance, just as, throughout the story, the adult Marnie is troubled by bad dreams. This motif lasts right through to Hitchcock's last picture, *Family Plot* (1976), whose action is catalyzed by the haunted, guilt-ridden dreams of Julia Rainbird (Cathleen Nesbitt) in which her dead sister addresses her.

All the images aren't so eerie, threatening or upsetting as these examples, of course. Dreamy, romantic moments are even more numerous in Hitchcock than the terrifying kind. The final moments of *Notorious* (1946), for example, are straight from the conventions of the fairy tale—T.R. Devlin (Cary Grant, as Prince Not-So-Charming) snatches Alicia Huberman (Ingrid Bergman, as Snow Beige) from the jaws of death. But Hitch turns this into a classic, irresistible love scene, both tense and moving, as he encircles the lovers with his camera.

And what of the first kiss between Dr. Constance Petersen (Ingrid Bergman) and the false Anthony Edwardes (Gregory Peck) in *Spellbound*, as all those hallucinatory doors suddenly open in a dream image behind them, indicating the undoing of repressions? It looks a little hokey today, but you don't laugh at Gainsborough simply because his technique preceded Picasso's.

While we're discussing romance: the kisses in Hitchcock's movies are justly famous. He liked to encircle the lovers with his camera, as if to embrace them, as if to rob us for just a moment of our sober, solidly objective viewpoint. The dream flashback in *I Confess* (1953), when Ruth (Anne Baxter) kisses Michael (Montgomery Clift), is a good example, but probably the best of them all is in *Vertigo*, when at last Judy Barton (Kim Novak) has been transformed by Scottie (James Stewart) into the image of his dead beloved. Now *there's* a kiss between lovers that rivals any kiss in the history of movies.

*

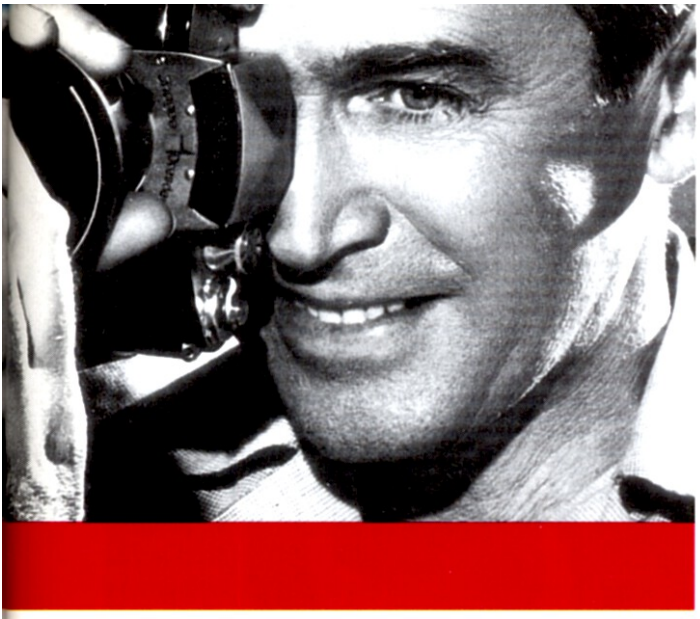
One of the curious elements of dreams is how the dreamer seems invariably aware of observing, of watching a strange, diffident world that is in some senses set free from control: it has its own time-space continuum, and the familiar is turned just so, made astonishingly fresh and unfamiliar. This is not surprising, for filmmaking and film watching are themselves variants on the very nature of looking and the same sort of re-ordering of the familiar.

Directly related to this is that hoariest of genres, the spy story, for the business of watching is the spy's stock-in-trade. But Hitchcock's espionage thrillers (*The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The 39 Steps*, *Secret Agent*, *The Lady Vanishes*, *Foreign Correspondent*, *Notorious*, *North by Northwest*) are, as I've suggested, mere pretexts for classical romances. It's in the *romance* that the theme of watching is italicized—just as in dreams. Think, in this regard, of the moments when the predator becomes the prey, moments linked with gazing, with the almost uncontrollable desire to see and to learn.

In *Rear Window* (1954), the great moment of suspense occurs when Lars Thorwald (Raymond Burr) looks back across the courtyard to see Jeffries (James Stewart) watching him and us—what a frisson!

In *Vertigo*, Scottie watches and pursues Madeleine/Judy. This may be the ultimate film about watching and pursuit, about seeing as desire. We're not so far from Freud's fancily expressed idea of *skoptophilia*, the gazing impulse that, pathologically, becomes voyeurism (an idea Freud elaborates in an essay on Wilhelm Jensen's novella *Gradiva*).

Tippi Hedren, *The Birds*, Universal, 1963.
"Marion's dead stare becomes Melanie's unseeing gaze."



This is the world of *Psycho*, of course: a twisted world from its opening shot. The camera seems to move through a partly open window—right over the sill and into a darkened room. It finds an empty chair nearby, moves over and, just like a spectator in a movie theater, "sits" in the chair. The field of vision then tilts up, and we see a semi-nude couple (John Gavin and Janet Leigh, playing Sam Loomis and Marion Crane).

All the subsequent gazing in the picture—by us, by Marion, by the suspicious patrolman (Mort Mills), by Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins)—is revealed as partial and imperfect seeing, mere watching without real vision or perception. It's logical, therefore, that Arbogast (Martin Balsam), the private eye, is stabbed in the eye, and that Lila Crane (Vera Miles) hits a suspended bare light bulb, causing it to swing and cast shadows in the empty sockets of Mother Bates's skull. Like all the "seeing" in the film, the skull's "gaze" is an empty, dead stare that recalls the open stare of Marion's corpse. To make his point clear, Hitchcock photographed Norman spying on Marion as she disrobes for the fatal shower: Norman removes from the wall a painting of Susannah and the elders, the biblical story of a woman overtaken in her bath by voyeurs whose passions were aroused as they spied on her from a secret place. The artistic representation of voyeurism and sexual exploitation is thus replaced, in the world of *Psycho*, by the action itself.

The brilliance of this, in Hitchcock's most nightmarish picture, is that the audience is supremely implicated. We not only watch Norman watching: the camera also swings around and the viewer stares *with* him. In a way, therefore, you can say that *Psycho* actualizes what *Rear Window* only observed, for in *Psycho* everyone gazes—especially in the last shot, when we gaze at the demented face gazing out at us. This is precisely the final image in Hitchcock's earlier TV drama *Lamb to the Slaughter*, when Mrs. Maloney (Barbara Bel Geddes) gazes, grinning in triumph, out at us. (She killed her husband with a blow to the head, using a frozen leg of lamb, then served the murder "weapon" to the investigating police.)

*

The theme of moral (not merely physical) vision—the basis of our watching in dream (where we act) and nightmare (where we are passive)—is carried forward in Hitchcock's next picture, his poetic masterpiece *The Birds*, a film that was in a way necessitated by the bird picture *Psycho* (Perkins, who munches Kandy Korn like a hen, stuffs birds; the last bird he "stuffs" is a Crane from Phoenix, and so forth).

Remarkably often, characters in *The Birds* say "I see" or "You see." The words are like a refrain, punctuating every stanza of the visual poem—just as every sequence concludes with a character staring out into space. Mrs. Bates's empty eye sockets in *Psycho* become the triple jump cut to the pecked-out sockets of the dead farmer. A child's eyeglasses are shattered as she flees attacking birds.

All the images and words about seeing point forward to the main character's empty stare—wide and imperceptive—and just as the shower murder in *Psycho* is carried forward in the bird attack on Melanie Daniels (Tippi Hedren) in the attic, so Marion's dead "stare" becomes Melanie's open, unseeing, shocked gaze. Lashing out and beating at nothing with her arms, her gaze frantic with terror, Melanie is unknowingly striking at a man who tries to calm her. She becomes the horrifyingly literal fulfillment of Norman's remark in *Psycho*: "We scratch and claw, but only at the air, only at each other—and for all of it, we never budge an inch."

*

This brings us to the motif of punishment, which in nightmares has no logic at all—just as in Hitchcock's films.

Ordinarily, we are not shown the punishment of villains in Hitchcock's stories, but simply their capture. He has no interest in the application of the legal machinery to a situation. The capture, in fact, is usually tossed in as a concession to the censors—and often enough, it's handled humorously. Think of Tony Wendice (Ray Milland) offering a round of drinks at the fade-out of *Dial M for Murder* (1954); or of Danielle Foussard (Brigitte Auber), blithely ignored after being unmasked as the robber at the end of *To Catch a Thief* (1955). Arthur Adamson (William Devane) and Fran (Karen Black) hardly matter at the end of *Family Plot*, and the fate of killer Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore) is ignored in *Vertigo*. Even the horrors of *Frenzy* (1972) conclude not with a bang but a chuckle ("Why, Mr. Rusk! You're not wearing your tie!").

With *Psycho*, as I've discussed elsewhere, there is a major shift in emphasis, for here the Furies drive mad the one guilty of matricide, Norman Bates (the Hitchcockian Orestes). But then those Furies abandon the vengeful insistence on the ancient law of blood for blood: the annihilation of personality is punishment enough.

In fact, Hitchcock takes us further into a country where the villain is no longer so undilutedly wicked. It's uncomfortable for us to realize, for example, that the murderous spy Professor Jordan (Godfrey Tearle) in *The 39 Steps* (1935) is a devoted family man careful to protect his daughter from deadly knowledge. In this regard, he's a forerunner of the loving father Stephen Fisher (Herbert Marshall) with his daughter Carol (Laraine Day) in *Foreign Correspondent* (1940). Like-

wise, Karl Verloc (Oscar Homolka) in *Sabotage* is a good family man (and a somewhat weak-willed saboteur). In *Notorious*, Alexander Sebastian (Claude Rains) loves Alicia Huberman (Ingrid Bergman) much more passionately than Devlin (Cary Grant). Mrs. Drayton (Brenda de Banzie) is a most disturbingly touching and devoted mother *manqué* in the remake of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. And our estimation of Marnie's mother, who seems so reprehensible a character, is entirely reversed by the final moments of the film: guilt and remorse had stifled her love, and at the end, she has a quiet dignity—almost, in fact, a heroic quality.

*

I think it is this detachment from the machinery of punishment that is the means Hitchcock took—or better, the hope that he entertained—for the re-establishment of order of a higher kind than mere legality. Hitchcock, after all, placed little trust in the unfolding and disbursement of legal justice: we have only to recall the judges and all the detectives who are their surrogates in other films. Hitchcock arouses in us a curious kind of magnanimity—at least by implication—by placing the offender elsewhere for the appointment of judgment.

And so I think it is this striving for detachment—as much an element of dreams as is involvement—which ultimately explains the disturbing moral complexity of the Hitchcock filmography. It's precisely this detachment, this great haze of gray, this refusal to divide the world into sheep and goats before the final reckoning, the refusal to tear up the weeds, that illuminates the filmmaker's intent. The great works may be great because they suggest that the most morally reprehensible attitude may be our own desire to see retribution meted out, to see punishment enacted—precisely the stance that would effectively further distance us from the villain with whom Hitchcock is so careful to link us spiritually.

*

In a sense, Hitchcock's films—poeticized dreams though they are—also reverse the chaos of the dreamworld. Carefully structured, they are—with one exception—linear narratives with a beginning, a middle and an end.

That exception, of course, is *The Birds*, a darkly lyrical tragic poem for which, elsewhere, I make very large claims indeed. All the usual characteristics of typical movies were tossed aside when Hitchcock and his writer, Evan Hunter, prepared the scenario. *The Birds* became something entirely different from what audiences expected from movies (and especially from Hitchcock). It is not a narrative with exposition, crisis and neat resolution but rather a series of stanzas reinforcing a single theme, which might be said to be the quality of vision, of how we perceive relationships; and each stanza of the poem is punctuated by the antiphonal statement "I see," when nobody really sees very much at all. The film operates completely on the level of metaphor, even when it most seems to resemble a horror story, a commentary on the bomb, on nature rebelling—all of which are interpretations doomed to failure. The film does not end, it simply stops: Hitchcock, in

James Stewart, *Vertigo*, Paramount, 1958.
"A dream where guilt and love collide with longing for death."

fact, insisted that the traditional final card ("The End") be omitted. (In subsequent release, Universal apparently felt to hell with Hitchcock, for the words were blithely appended.)

Otherwise, Hitchcock's traditional narratives resolve conflicts, they give finality to tension, and they order life. Having confronted the absurd and the chaotic, they open up for us a possibility of a return to the world of reason—hence the final image of *Psycho*, the dragging of the car from the slime—a powerful and therapeutic image of drawing up the shadow world into daylight. In this regard, Hitchcock's painstaking artistic method of filmmaking is in fact his meaning: the planning, the care, the symmetry—this was his way of taking a stand against chaos. The commitment to structure, not to disorder, was itself an ethos affirming the primacy of meaning in order.

*

But no one appreciated romantic fantasy more than Hitchcock did, and no one could show us more clearly how we can feel about that portion of human experience.

Dreamers and fantasists, lovers and killers crowd his films and leap out at us, astonishingly familiar cousins to our own hopes and fears. He never appealed to the processes of mere reason but rather to levels of feeling from which no one is exempt. He knew the fears and the longings first ("I'm afraid of everything," he once told me, "more afraid than anyone who sees my films"), which is why he could portray them so vividly to us.

Disturbingly often, romantic impulses have a dangerous undercurrent, and gestures of affection verge on the violent. The lovemaking of Roger Thornhill (Cary Grant) and Eve Kendall (Eva Marie Saint) aboard the train in *North by Northwest* is tinged with an uneasy dread as his hands encircle her neck and she asks, "How do I know you're not going to kill me, right here and now?"

"Shall I?" he counters.

"Please do," she purrs.

It's very much the same when the innocent man on the run from the police—Richard Blaney (Jon Finch) in *Frenzy*—places strangling hands around the neck of girlfriend Babs Milligan (Anna Massey) and jokes that no, he's not the mad killer on the loose—but we know that his temper is as wild and murderous as the villain's. Just so: "She's the most precious thing in the world to me," says Uncle Charlie while he squeezes his niece's face so tightly she winces in pain.

The complex of pleasure and pain, nightmare and dream, began in 1926, in Hitchcock's first British film, *The Lodger*. A detective (Malcolm Keen) boasts that after he's put handcuffs on the killer, he'll put a ring on the finger of his girlfriend (June)—and at once he playfully snaps the handcuffs on her, causing the poor woman to panic at the bondage. There's a similar attraction-repulsion business about romance (always linked to handcuffs) in *The 39 Steps* and *Saboteur* (1942), too, as blondes (Madeleine Carroll and Priscilla Lane) are unwillingly manacled to men (Robert Donat and Robert Cummings).

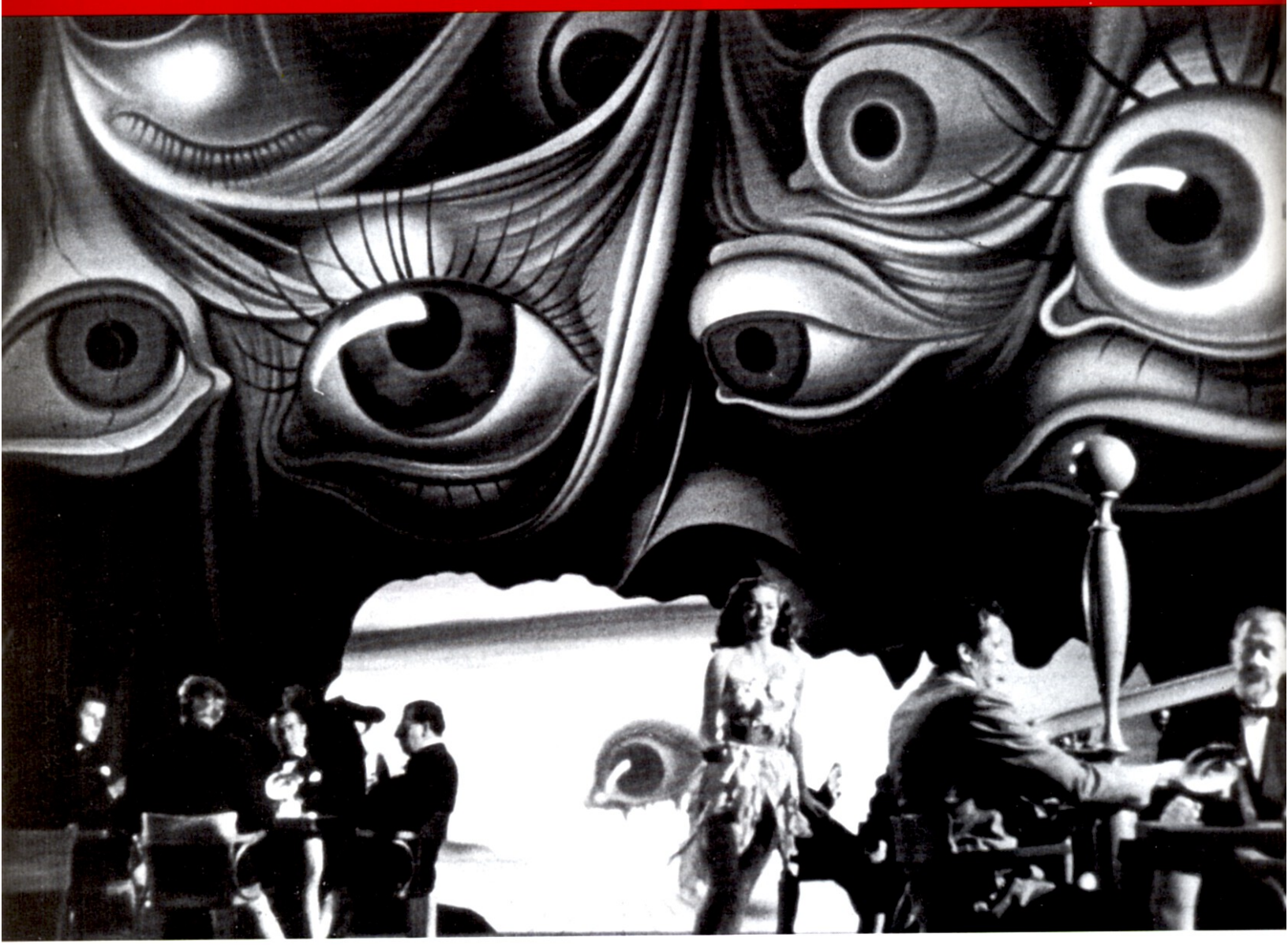
Jon Finch, *Frenzy*, Universal, 1972.
"Horrors that conclude not with a bang but a chuckle."

Hitchcock could also be prophetic in spinning his dream-tales. When he made *Sabotage* in 1936, people said the movie's plot of terrorists planting bombs in central London was a wild idea: now, alas, it's all too common. The kidnapping in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934, revised and vastly improved in his 1956 remake) is no longer a fantastic fiction. And the lunatic serial killer of *Psycho* smiles grimly from our televisions at news time.

The world of Hitchcock's dream-tales is opaque, full of surprise and treachery, thick with frustration and riddled with anxiety. But it is finally a world where men and women are usually offered a chastening, transforming experience. This is the classical structure of storytelling, of course—tales about the humanizing process, fables of conversion and redemption, whatever you call them. He takes us on tours, excursions to the frontiers of chaos, a world in which anything can happen and probably will. Unlike his inferiors, who too often gleefully concoct images of violence, decay and death, Hitchcock looks evil squarely in the face and calls it evil. Hitch shows us not how *all* life is, but how *some* of life is, and what all life is in constant danger of becoming. Fantasist and fabulist, the great Alfred Hitchcock remains disturbingly alive in his eternal dreams, those remarkable movies.

Among Donald Spoto's nineteen published books are The Art of Alfred Hitchcock *and* The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock.

The Salvador Dalí designed dream sequence from *Spellbound*, United Artists, 1945. *"Sometimes Hitchcock literally gives us his character's dreams."*



ALFRED, MEET SIGMUND

Hitchcock was fascinated by Freudian dream interpretation—nowhere more so than in *Spellbound* (1945), whose central characters are a psychiatrist and her tormented patient/lover.

In this sequence, filmed with set designs by Salvador Dalí, the as yet unidentified amnesiac (played by Gregory Peck) describes his nightmare to Dr. Constance Petersen (Ingrid Bergman) and her mentor, Dr. Brulov (Michael Chekhov). The scene takes place in Dr. Brulov's sitting room. As the dialogue proceeds, we see through the windows a light snow falling and children riding down a hill on sleds. Hitchcock's particular pleasure was in poking fun at glib psychoanalytic language: hence, here, he adds dashes of ironic humor to Ben Hecht's script.

BRULOV The patient is going to tell us what he dreamt.

CONSTANCE *(Enters with a tray of coffee cups)* Oh, fine! I'll take notes—I'll get my glasses.

BRULOV *(To his patient)* Now, here is where dreams come in! They tell you what you are trying to hide. But they tell it to you all mixed up, like pieces of a puzzle that don't fit. The problem of the analyst is to examine the puzzle and to put these pieces together in the right place and find out what the devil you are trying to say to yourself!

PATIENT Let's see. I kept thinking while I was dreaming that all this meant something. There was some other meaning in it that I ought to find out.

CONSTANCE We'll find out.

PATIENT I can't make out just what sort of a place it was. It seemed to be a gambling house. But there weren't any walls—just a lot of curtains, with eyes painted on them. A man was walking around with a large pair of scissors, cutting all the drapes in half. And then a girl came in with hardly anything on and started walking around the gambling room kissing people. She came to my table first.

BRULOV Did you recognize this kissing bug?

PATIENT I'm afraid she looked a little like Constance.

BRULOV This is plain, ordinary wishful dreaming. Go on.

PATIENT I was sitting there playing cards, with a man who had a beard. I was dealing to him and I turned up the seven of clubs. He said, "That makes twenty-one! I win!" But when he turned up his cards, they were blank! Just then, the proprietor came in and accused him of cheating. The proprietor yelled, "This is my place, and if I catch you cheating again, I'll fix you!" *(To Constance)* I'm sorry about that kissing bug.

CONSTANCE I'm glad you didn't dream of me as an eggbeater, as one of my patients did!

PATIENT Why? What would that mean?

CONSTANCE *(Grinning)* Never mind.

PATIENT Does it make any sense to you, what I've dreamed?

CONSTANCE Not yet. You're trying to tell yourself something. What it is, we'll figure out later.

PATIENT There's a lot more to it!

BRULOV Go on and try to recall the details. The more cockeyed, the better for the scientific side of it!

PATIENT He was leaning over the slope of a high building—the man with the beard. I yelled at him to watch out. Then he went over, slowly, with his feet in the air. Then I saw the proprietor, the man in the mask—he was hiding behind a tall chimney and had a small wheel in his hand. I saw him drop the wheel on the roof. Suddenly, I was running. Then I heard something beating over my head—it was a great pair of wings—the wings chased me and almost caught up with me when I came to the bottom of the hill. I must have escaped—I don't remember. That's all there was. I woke up and saw Dr. Brulov.

BRULOV Have some coffee.

PATIENT Thanks.

As he turns to accept the cup, he is suddenly traumatized. His eyes stare widely, he is speechless, removed from the others.

PATIENT *(As if from a dream)* Something's happening.

CONSTANCE What is it?

She glances outside.

CONSTANCE Snow!

BRULOV The light frightened him—photophobia!

CONSTANCE No, it was the snow!

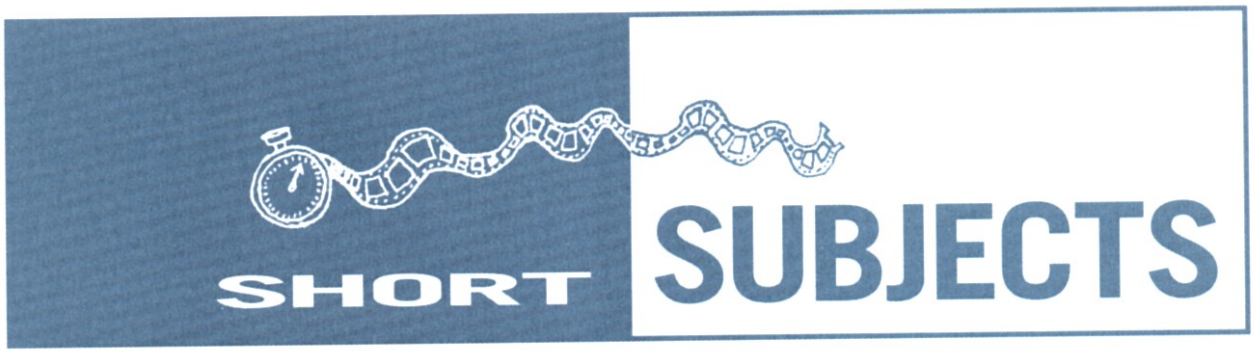
She gazes out at the children, whose sleds make parallel lines in the snow.

CONSTANCE That's the white he's afraid of! Snow—and those tracks.

BRULOV What tracks?

CONSTANCE The sled tracks in the snow! The first time he was shocked at the sight of fork lines drawn on a white tablecloth—and my robe, with dark lines on it. And last night it was the coverlet. And now those dark tracks in the snow.

BRULOV We'll pull the blinds down, please . . .



Gofer

By Joe Hamersky

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE – DAY

Various tradesmen go about their jobs: sparks fly in all directions as a WELDER grinds a piece of metal, one CARPENTER screws a board into place, another CARPENTER high on a scaffold cuts the end off a 2x4, letting it drop to the ground, a TAPER floats his way across the floor using a stack of joint compound buckets as stilts, while applying plaster to the ceiling . . .

CLOSE on the head of a push-broom moving forward across the floor. Construction debris collects in front of it: sawdust, small wood scraps, pieces of electrical cable, etc.

GORBY, a young immigrant laborer, absent-mindedly pushes the broom. He has a naturally charming smile and pretty face.

SUDDENLY:

CRABBY CARPENTER *(Shouting)* Hey! Take the broom and you gotta use small, short strokes.

Gorby doesn't know how to react.

CRABBY CARPENTER And put a little muscle in it.

GORBY *(Smiling)* Why not? I can do it.

CRABBY CARPENTER And listen, wipe that smile off your face.

VOICE OF BOBBY *(O.S.) (Shouting from afar)* Gorby!

Gorby and the Crabby Carpenter look up.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE – DAY

BOBBY, a carpenter in his thirties, nonchalantly stands near the edge at the top of a high scaffold.

BOBBY Hey, Gorby! Bring me some three-inch screws!

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE – DAY

CRABBY CARPENTER Go on. Go on. You know where they are. Go. Go get 'em.

Gorby gives him the broom and walks off.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE, BASE OF SCAFFOLD – DAY

Gorby grabs the faded bars of the slightly rusted scaffold.

Not too sure of himself, he uncomfortably begins to climb.

Bobby sticks his head over the edge, following Gorby's nervous ascent.

Bobby takes out his hammer and BANGS it against the scaffolding.

Already halfway up, Gorby freezes.

PLATFORM ON TOP OF SCAFFOLD

On top of the scaffolding platform a scruffy, hungover carpenter, CARL, sits half-awake propped up against the building.

CARL Thanks a lot. I needed that.

BOBBY Try getting some sleep for a change.

CARL Let me tell you, Bobby. God, she was beautiful. She had green eyes, black curly hair . . .

Gorby pokes his head over the edge of the scaffold.

CARL . . . and that pasty white frickin' alabaster skin. You know? I love women. I live for women.

GORBY *(Chiming in)* I love women. I live for women.

CARL That's it. But I respect women.

GORBY I respect women.

BOBBY Hey, how 'bout those screws. Did you bring those screws or what?

GORBY Yeah, yeah.

Gorby struggles to hold on to the scaffold and dig the screws out of his pocket.

BOBBY Come on. Let's go.

Gorby finally drops a handful of screws.

BOBBY *(Picking up a screw)* Gorby?! What the hell is this? This is not a three-inch screw.

GORBY I think so.

CARL Hey, Gorby, just tell him to fuck off. Or something like, "It's already time for coffee already."

GORBY It's already time for coffee already.

BOBBY Is it? Alright. *(Yelling in Carl's ear)* COFFEE!!

CARL Ah, that's nice. Hey, listen, pig and coffee for me, Gorby. Good? You got it? Here, you better try writing it down.

Carl tosses a two-foot-long 2x4 scrap in Gorby's direction. It lands with a THUD right in front of Gorby's face.

CARL *(Tossing a pencil)* Here. Pig and coffee for me. Don't get him anything.

BOBBY Coffee, bagel, butter. You got that?

GORBY *(Writing)* Pig and coffee.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE, SHEETROCKED ROOM – DAY

Gorby walks in holding his 2x4.

He looks up in awe as the TAPER effortlessly skim-coats the ceiling.

Gorby looks really small.

TAPER *(Without stopping)* Just coffee for me, thanks.

With a delicate script, Gorby writes the order down on the 2x4.

GORBY *(Watching the Taper's movements)* How did you learn to do that?

TAPER Practice. It's not hard.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE, BASEMENT – DAY

Gorby comes down the stairs to find the FOREMAN yelling into a cellular phone.

FOREMAN No, no, no. What I care about is that I have meter boxes with no meters in them. The guy told me he'd be here two weeks ago. Then last week he said he'd be here . . . What! *(To Gorby)* What?

GORBY Coffee break.

FOREMAN Get me a coffee light half half-and-half, and half milk. Give me a sesame bagel with butter. If they don't have sesame, get me a bialy.

The Foreman goes back to the phone.

Gorby is unsure what to write down for the order.

FOREMAN Now listen to me. I'm gonna . . . Look. No. I don't have much patience anymore, man. I'm . . . Hold on. *(To Gorby)* Gorby, what? What, what, what?

GORBY Money.

The Foreman gives him a large bill.

FOREMAN Bring me change.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE, MAIN ROOM – DAY

Gorby is wedged between an IRISH CARPENTER on the ground and an ENGLISH CARPENTER on a small scaffold.

IRISH CARPENTER Let me have a bacon, egg and cheese on a roll and a tea with lemon. Alright?

ENGLISH CARPENTER Gorb, I'll have a cup of tea, little bit of milk, and a buttered roll. You got it?

The Irish Carpenter notices Gorby writing the order down on the 2x4.

IRISH CARPENTER Hey, Gorb, are you sure you don't want a bigger board?

ENGLISH CARPENTER *(Tugging on the board)* That's the bit I was looking for. Where'd you get it?

GORBY *(Resisting)* No! Carl gave it to me.

ENGLISH CARPENTER That bastard. Here, I'll trade you. How 'bout this one?

He offers an even bigger board.

GORBY No, I need this one.

ENGLISH CARPENTER It's bigger, mate.

Gorby waves him off.

IRISH CARPENTER Tea with lemon. Don't forget the fucking lemon.

GORBY I wrote it down.

IRISH CARPENTER Okay. Just checking ya.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE – DAY
Intense blue light flashes in bursts as a WELDER works on some steel bars propped up in a corner.

Gorby backs in using the 2x4 to protect his eyes.

GORBY *(Yelling)* Do you want something from the store?

The Welder doesn't respond.

GORBY *(Poking him with the 2x4)* Hey!

The Welder stops and flips up his mask.

WELDER What?

GORBY Coffee break. I'm going to the store.

WELDER Oh, ah. Get me . . . whatever . . . something nice.

GORBY Nice?

WELDER I don't know . . . coffee and . . . surprise me.

He flicks his mask down and immediately resumes welding.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE, BACK ROOM – DAY
Gorby washes his hands, smooths out his hair and cleans his face.

The Irish Carpenter and the Taper come in to clean up before break.

IRISH CARPENTER What the fuck, you haven't left yet?

TAPER You never know who you might meet out there.

GORBY *(Putting on his coat)* What's a bialy?

IRISH CARPENTER Bialy? A wild animal.

TAPER Be careful.

INT. DELI/DINER – DAY
The middle-aged OWNER puts the various items into a cardboard box. His attractive DAUGHTER adds them up on a pad.

Gorby and the Daughter smile at each other.

OWNER Five coffees, one with half-and-half, three teas, two buttered bagels, one with cream cheese, two bacon egg and cheese, one egg and potato, one toasted blueberry and one banana. Sorry, no bialys.

DAUGHTER That's $17.50.

OWNER Anything else?

GORBY You put everything else on the side?

OWNER *(Holding up a bag of condiments)* Don't I always take care of you?

GORBY Yes, but—

OWNER Let's make it 15 dollars today. Yours is on me. Alright? *(Picking up the 2x4)* Are you going to be needing this back?

GORBY No, no. I've got lots of those.

OWNER Good. I could use something like this to hold up that back counter.

He walks off with the 2x4.

GORBY *(Getting out the money)* How's your son?

DAUGHTER He's been crying a lot lately.

GORBY That's hard. You need a man around to help you out.

DAUGHTER Yeah. No thanks. One baby's enough.

Gorby laughs and picks up the box of coffees.

GORBY Okay. See you tomorrow.

DAUGHTER Okay, then. Take care.

The CAMERA follows Gorby as he walks out the door, ENDING on a framed PHOTO of Gorby, below which reads: Customer of the Week.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE, MAIN ROOM – DAY
The crew, already into their break, sits sprawled out on toolboxes, sawhorses, overturned buckets, etc.

The Taper pages through *The New York Post*. The Crabby Carpenter pours coffee from a thermos. The Irish Carpenter squirts ketchup on his egg sandwich.

IRISH CARPENTER So the question was where was the finger. I knew it had to be around here someplace.

WELDER Not while I'm eating.

ENGLISH CARPENTER So what'd you do?

IRISH CARPENTER *(Taking a sip of tea)* I'll tell ya. See, a touch of panic set in. After all, this is a man's finger we're

talking about here. I'm standing there looking at the table saw, big pile of sawdust underneath it. And I just fucking know it has to be in there. I know it.

ENGLISH CARPENTER That is disgusting.

WELDER Do we have to talk about this now?

CARL What'd you dig around there looking for it?

IRISH CARPENTER Am I crazy? I told Gorby to do it.

Everyone, including Gorby, laughs.

GORBY Come on. What happened?

IRISH CARPENTER What happened? *(Demonstrating)* I took out my tape measure, like that, two, three feet. And I started raking the sawdust. Raking and raking. I'll be damned if I didn't rake that little fucker outta there.

WELDER *(Throwing his muffin on the floor)* Ah, shit. I lost my appetite.

BOBBY Yeah, and that's one of those tricks they won't show you on "This Old House." *(Lifting up a screw)* Okay, Gorby. Time for a pop quiz. Here. *(Dropping the screw in Gorby's hand)* Tell me what size that screw is.

ENGLISH CARPENTER Oh, Gorb, you're in trouble now.

IRISH CARPENTER Drumroll, please.

GORBY Two inch.

BOBBY *(Making a noise like a game-show buzzer)* Bzzzt. Wrong. That is inch and five-eights. But you get a second chance. *(Holding up another screw)* For five hundred dollars, tell me what size this screw is.

He tosses it over to Gorby.

GORBY Three inch.

BOBBY Are you sure?

All eyes turn to Gorby.

GORBY Two inch.

BOBBY Ah, come on. Which one is it now?

IRISH CARPENTER Five dollars says he gets it.

ENGLISH CARPENTER Five says he don't. No way.

BOBBY Okay, okay. Think about it.

GORBY Three inch.

ENGLISH CARPENTER Yes. Cough up son.

CRABBY CARPENTER Hey! It's three inches.

ENGLISH CARPENTER Get the fuck out.

BOBBY Yeah, he's right.

ENGLISH CARPENTER Don't look at me. Ask Gorb for the money. You know he's shaving a tenner from us every morning.

IRISH CARPENTER Ah, sure. I knew this laborer one time. Made a hundred a week just from going out for coffee.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE, STREET – DAY

A delivery truck fully loaded with building materials rumbles up to the job site and begins HONKING its horn.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE, MAIN ROOM – DAY

IRISH CARPENTER You see, he played two delis off each other. Wound up getting everything for half price. And on top of that free fucking breakfast for himself.

Gorby smiles and shakes his head no.

TAPER He has more than money on his mind.

CARL Gorby? . . . Who is she?

GORBY Nobody.

CARL The one in the deli, right?

BOBBY And she's looking good for having had a kid.

IRISH CARPENTER What kid?

BOBBY What kid! She's got a kid. She told me. It's your kid.

IRISH CARPENTER Yeah? I guess she's not a virgin. But that's a good thing, right, Gorby? Know what I mean?

Everyone chuckles at Gorby's expense.

Suddenly, the door leading outside flies open and a CHINESE TRUCK DRIVER from the lumber yard bursts in.

DRIVER Come on, come on. No time today.

TAPER *(Over the newspaper)* Relax, man. We'll be with you in five minutes.

CARL Why do you always have to come when we're on fucking break?

DRIVER Americans always on coffee break. Lazy people.

BOBBY You want some of my coffee?

DRIVER *(Slapping Gorby's shoulder)* Why so clean? You fuckie, fuckie last night?

Everyone laughs. Gorby barely looks up.

The Foreman walks in.

FOREMAN I'm going to kill that fucking electrician. Gorby, where's my coffee?

GORBY It's the one with the X on it.

FOREMAN *(Going over to the cardboard box)* Is there anymore sugar?

GORBY I think so.

FOREMAN *(Noticing the Driver)* Ah, shit. How long has he been here?

TAPER Couple minutes. We'll go out there in a second.

FOREMAN *(Still searching the box)* Gorby, I don't see any sugar. I see ketchup and salt. Where's my fucking sugar. I told you three sugars. How many times do I have to tell you that. How the fuck?

GORBY He told me that he put—

FOREMAN Ah! Alright, I'm not drinking coffee, no one's drinking coffee. Let's go. Thank you, Gorby. Let's go get that truck unloaded.

Gorby stands up and starts looking for the sugar himself.

GORBY *(Getting more and more frantic)* He told me. . . He told me it was in here . . . The sugar he said I put . . . Fucking guy . . .

Gorby picks up the empty bag and repeatedly slams it on the table.

GORBY *(Losing it)* . . . The fuck, fuck, fuck, fucking, fuck, fucking, fucking guy!

Everybody looks at Gorby—stunned.

Gorby stands motionless in shock.

After a moment, Bobby starts to laugh.

The Taper is next, with a large wide laugh.

The laughter is contagious and soon the whole crew is in the middle of a huge, collective belly laugh.

Even the Foreman grins.

A smile grows on Gorby's face. For the first time, he is proud of himself and happy to be the center of attention.

FOREMAN Alright, alright, let's get that truck unloaded.

The crew slowly gets up and heads for the door. A few of them pat Gorby's shoulder as they pass.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE, STREET– DAY

The crew is unloading the truck. The Driver is standing on the bed of the truck handing down materials.

Gorby and Bobby take a piece of plywood. Gorby almost drops it.

Bobby shows Gorby the right way to carry it so he's not fighting against himself.

Gorby nods in appreciation.

EXTREME HIGH ANGLE FROM ROOFTOP

The crew continues taking materials off the truck. Bobby and Gorby come back for a second time.

They all look like ants.

Gofer
14 minutes
Written and Directed by Joe Hamersky
PRINCIPAL CAST:
Gorby: *Aasif Mandvi*
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Writing Gofer

Joe Hamersky enjoys telling the stories of working-class people. "I worked my whole life. What someone does 40 hours a week affects who they are. It's a good starting place for a character." Hamersky worked in construction and used the money he saved to finance *Gofer*, which depicts the casual machismo on a construction site. Hamersky likes the combination of writing a fictional script but using real situations. His first short fiction film, *Breadman*, followed a real bread deliveryman. Hamersky makes fiction films but he's inspired by documentaries. "Documentary films give you a window into a world you've never seen. Hopefully, that's what *Gofer* does. Same with *Breadman*. How does bread get delivered? You actually see how it happens."

Gofer is the story of Gorby, the errand man on a job site. "It's something you see every day, the low man on the totem pole having to get everyone's coffee and take all the abuse. Gorby watches everyone in wonderment and awe. He takes constant little jabs from his co-workers until finally he explodes." Ironically, with that explosion, he becomes one of the guys. "In an earlier draft of the script," says Hamersky, "Gorby wants to learn how to say the word 'fuck' properly. Everyone on the site says 'fuck' in all possible ways–fuck this, fucking that. Gorby's not sure what the correct way is. His explosion was his attempt to say it right. Saying 'fuck' properly is a symbol for being one of the guys, that's his rite of passage. As the script evolved, that idea was dropped, but it's still there beneath the surface."

Hamersky made *Gofer* for his Master's degree at Columbia University. *Gofer* won Columbia's top prize, the 1998 Polo Ralph Lauren Award for Best Film. Hamersky's next script? A feature about a DMV driving examiner, "the guy who gives you the road test for you to get your license. Mostly they fail everybody, for the smallest things. It's a comedy." About another working-class guy.–*A.N.*

Fish Belly White

By Michael Burke

INT. CHICKEN COOP – DAY
Open on hands picking eggs from straw nests and carefully placing them in a wire egg basket. Chickens begin to squawk angrily in the background. A fight is breaking out. DUNCAN, the egg carrier, runs outside yelling.

DUNCAN *(O.S.)* Goddamnit! Leave her alone.

EXT. CHICKEN COOP – DAY
A group of Rhode Island Reds, big, beautiful birds, move in a frenzy near the wire fence. An egg smashes on the post next to them. Then another.

DUNCAN *(O.S.)* Go on! Get!

Duncan, 15, awkward, cradles a cream-colored chicken in his arms like a baby. Smaller than the others, it appears injured or dead. He throws one last egg with what is obviously not his dominant hand. The big birds scatter. His attention turns to the bird in his arms. He strokes her chest.

DUNCAN Are they pickin' on you again?

He perches her on his hand. She's very alive. He brings her up to his face and talks to her gently as he strokes her. She is restless. He buries his nose in her feathers and smells her. He makes clucking sounds as he soothes her.

DUNCAN Don't worry. Your dad will protect you.

He places her head in his mouth, closes his lips around her neck and closes his eyes. The bird stops moving. DUNCAN'S FATHER appears in the doorway of the coop. He carries a small pig by one hind leg. The pig begins squealing. Duncan opens his eyes and sees his father staring at him. He takes the chicken from his mouth and looks down. The chicken looks around. With a look of anguish, his father turns and walks away without a word.

EXT. THE FARM – DAY
Duncan speeds down his driveway on his bicycle and turns quickly onto the road. His chicken is now perched in a wire basket on his handlebars.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD – DAY
They ride through the dense green countryside under a canopy of trees. An orange truck approaches from behind them. Duncan pedals, oblivious to the truck. It gains on him, tires tearing up the dirt road. Boys "whoop" from inside it, passing inches from Duncan. Startled, Duncan wobbles on his bike and stops on the side of the road. He watches them go and waves excitedly as if they might stop. His hand and face drop as they speed ahead.

EXT. THE COW BARN – DAY
Duncan rides down a dirt road with pastures on either side of him. A lone cow bellows. He stops his bike and looks toward the sound. It calls to him again. He walks up to the wooden fence with the chicken under his arm.

DUNCAN Hey, girl. How come you're tied up?

He pets her face. Nuzzling his hand, the cow extends its long blue tongue, wrapping it around his wrist and licking the salt from his skin. He closes his eyes. PERRY, 17, watches him from the doorway of the barn. Smoking the last bit of a cigarette, he stamps it out and walks toward Duncan.

PERRY She likes you.

Duncan, startled, turns and wipes the cow spit on his pants. He can't look directly at Perry. Perry unties the cow and starts to lead her away. Duncan calls after him.

DUNCAN I like cows.

Perry keeps walking, his back to Duncan.

PERRY You like chickens too, huh, Duncan. You wanna milk her?

Duncan looks up as Perry and the cow disappear into the barn. Its huge, heavy udder sways as it walks. He takes the chicken and sets her on the fence.

DUNCAN *(To the chicken)* You wait here.

The chicken looks around quizzically.

INT. THE COW BARN – DAY
Duncan crouches in front of the udder. He reaches out and pats it, then jiggles it. Perry laughs behind him.

PERRY She's got a big bag on her, hug. Grab the tits!

Duncan cups one of the teats in his palm, studies it, then gives it a gentle squeeze. Perry watches from behind.

PERRY You're not gonna get much that way. Here, lemme show you.

He moves in next to Duncan, pressing against him. Duncan tenses up.

PERRY Like this.

More aggressive, he curls his fingers around the teat one by one as he pulls down. Milk hits the empty tin pail.

PERRY You try it.

Duncan fails. Perry grabs his wrist hard.

PERRY Put your hand up there!

He puts his free hand on top of Duncan's.

PERRY Now squeeze your fingers and pull.

Milk hits the pail. Duncan jumps up, almost knocking Perry over.

DUNCAN I gotta go.

Perry picks himself up, confused by Duncan's exit.

EXT. THE COW BARN – DAY
Duncan rides off frantically, chicken in tow. He doesn't look back. Perry stands behind the fence watching Duncan ride off.

EXT. SHACK – DAY
Duncan puts his bike down next to an abandoned brick-red shack. He picks up the chicken and carries her inside.

INT. SHACK – DAY
A torn rug covers the dusty old floorboards. A 1950s poster of a smiling milkman hangs crookedly on the wall. Duncan stands in one corner holding an ornate silver butane lighter. He passes his hand back and forth through the broad flame. He studies the lighter for a moment, touches it to the cigarette poised in his mouth, then puts it in his pocket. He half-sits in a broken chair.

With one hand he pulls a worm from his pocket and holds it writhing in the air above the chicken. She jumps up and takes it from him. He chuckles at her. Standing again, he looks at the poster as he smokes.

As he exhales, he brings the cigarette to it and burns the smiling man's chest. He lifts his shirt with his free hand then brings the cigarette to his own stomach, letting the shirt fall over it and wincing as he presses it into his flesh. The chicken pecks at old cigarette butts at his feet.

EXT. CHURCH – THE NEXT DAY
A bell clangs from the spired steeple. Duncan parks his bike next to the church. He has dressed up and slicked his hair back, The MINISTER stands on the steps, greeting parishioners as they file in. Duncan walks up the steps.

MINISTER Duncan! Good to see you.

He clasps Duncan's hand with both of his. Duncan smiles a big smile.

DUNCAN Good morning.

INT. CHURCH – DAY
An elderly man energetically plays an antique accordion. Duncan stands in the front row as the CONGREGATION sings.

CONGREGATION I lift my heart up unto the Lord . . .

Duncan sings enthusiastically and off-key. An elderly woman in a sleeveless, floral sundress stands next to him.

CONGREGATION I lift my hands up unto the Lord . . .

The congregation lifts its hands to the words. The old woman's tricep sways as she moves. Duncan stares at it and stops singing, transfixed. Slowly he reaches up and jiggles the soft flesh. Behind him, two teenage girls, MISSY and TINA, witness the touch. He turns and looks at them staring and looks quickly away. They smile to each other. The song finishes. The old woman holds her arms across her chest. The minister speaks.

MINISTER You may be seated.

Everyone but Duncan sits.

MINISTER Let us pray.

Duncan clasps his hands together. Bowing his head, he tries to pray. Several people chuckle. He looks up and around, then turns and bolts down the aisle . . .

EXT. CHURCH – DAY
. . . out the open doors, and down the steps. A woman stands on the steps trying to comfort her screaming infant.

EXT. THE COW BARN – DAY
Duncan buries his face in a cow's neck. He stands, gently tracing small circles on her neck. His eyes are closed and he hums the hymn from church. Perry stands next to a rusty orange gas pump, smoking and watching Duncan. He frees his sweaty T-shirt from his jeans and pulls it over his frame then wipes the sweat from his chest and underarms.

Hands untie the rope securing the cow to the barn and start to lead her to the fence. Duncan looks up as the cow moves.

DUNCAN Hey, Perry.

Perry turns and throws his shirt playfully at Duncan.

PERRY You're awful dressed up.

Duncan catches it as it hits his face and chest.

DUNCAN Church.

Perry turns back. Duncan looks at the shirt and at Perry.

PERRY Did I miss anything?

Duncan sniffs the damp cloth. He exhales the shirt smell as he speaks.

DUNCAN Mmm. Not really.

Perry throws the rope over the fence and climbs up and sits on the rail.

PERRY Where's your chicken?

Duncan climbs up next to him.

DUNCAN Home.

Faint heavy-metal music is heard. The orange truck appears on the horizon. Perry grabs his shirt and pushes Duncan off the fence.

PERRY Get off!

Duncan catches himself, confused, as Perry puts on his shirt. Perry unties the rope and smacks the cow on the rump. She ambles off. He picks up a pail and holds it as the pickup pulls up. BRENT, the driver, in his 20s, climbs out and sits in his window. TRAVIS and DARREN, two peach-fuzz-faced boys, Duncan's age, sit in the front. Brent yells across the truck to Perry.

BRENT What's up? We're going up to the swamp, you wanna come?

Perry looks at the uninvited Duncan. Duncan doesn't realize he's not invited. He moves to the fence.

DUNCAN *(To Perry)* I'll go.

Brent stares at him.

BRENT *(Sarcastically)* I guess prob'ly. Not you, Chicken Boy.

The other boys laugh. Perry doesn't. Duncan looks down and fiddles with his bicycle through the fence.

PERRY I can't. I gotta work.

Brent pauses, chewing at one of his fingernails. He looks suspiciously from Duncan to Perry, then spits out a piece of skin.

BRENT You lose. Later, man.

He climbs back in the truck. The boys make chicken noises and laugh as they drive off. The sound of their music and laughter fades away. It is quiet again.

DUNCAN You're friends with them?

Perry puts down the pail and avoids the question. He jumps over the fence.

PERRY Hey, I was about to go swimming. Wanna go?

The deflated Duncan hesitates for a moment, then tries to jump over the fence like Perry. Unsuccessful, he climbs it instead.

DUNCAN Yeah, if you want me to.

They walk off. A cow drinks from the pail.

EXT. COW PASTURE – DAY
They walk through the rocky hillside toward the horizon. Duncan walks his bike and tries to make conversation.

DUNCAN You goin' to college?

PERRY No. You?

DUNCAN I want to.

PERRY My dad wants me to run the farm.

DUNCAN Mine too.

EXT. WOODS – DAY
They continue walking. Perry picks up rocks and throws them aimlessly.

PERRY How much you bet I can hit that squirrel?

DUNCAN Why would you wanna do that?

Perry fires the rock violently.

PERRY I dunno.

Duncan stops. Perry continues walking.

PERRY *(O.S.)* Come on.

Duncan moves ahead.

EXT. THE SWAMP – DAY
Perry crouches as he moves toward the orange truck parked on the side of a dirt road. He motions for Duncan to follow him. They watch from behind the truck for a moment. Sounds of firecrackers are heard. Perry moves closer and motions again for Duncan to follow. Through the cover of trees, they see the boys near the water, setting off firecrackers and laughing. Still spying, Duncan wrinkles his nose and makes a face. He whispers to Perry.

DUNCAN It stinks.

PERRY It's stagnant.

DUNCAN *(Somewhat indignant)* I know.

One of the boys is chasing something in the water. As he catches it, another throws a small object into the air which

explodes. More laughter.

DUNCAN What are they blowing up?

Perry looks at Duncan, pauses, and knowing the answer will horrify him, whispers back.

PERRY Frogs.

Duncan looks down.

DUNCAN Eew.

Perry smiles at him. He grabs him and holds him across his forehead, making him look up. Duncan starts to yell.

DUNCAN Lemme go!

Perry covers Duncan's mouth with his hand. Duncan resists. He doesn't let go. He whispers as he makes Duncan watch.

PERRY Fourth a July, this guy I know stuck a cherry bomb up a dog's ass and almost blew its whole ass off.

Duncan stops struggling and closes his eyes. Perry's hand still covers his mouth.

EXT. CREEK BED – DAY
They walk down an almost dry creek bed in silence, stepping from stone to stone. Perry leads, carrying Duncan's bike on his shoulder.

EXT. CULVERT – DAY
Perry walks through an enormous metal culvert with a small stream running through it. Perry still has Duncan's bike. He wheels it through the water. His voice echoes as he speaks.

PERRY It's up ahead.

Duncan hesitates then follows behind him.

EXT. TRAIN TRESTLE – DAY
Duncan sits on the tracks fully clothed. He has taken off his shoes and socks. He smokes a cigarette. Perry walks toward him, dripping wet.

PERRY Aren't you comin' in?

He flops down, grabs a cigarette with wet fingers, and picks up Duncan's lighter.

DUNCAN I'm waitin' till I'm more sweaty.

Perry lays across the tracks, smoking. He holds up the lighter, clicking it open and shut, open and shut. Duncan's eyes wander over his body.

PERRY My dad has one like this.

DUNCAN You want it?

Perry clicks the lighter shut and rolls over to face him.

PERRY *(Indifferently)* Sure.

Duncan smiles. Perry smiles back.

PERRY Feel this.

Embarrassed, Duncan reaches out to touch Perry's flexed arm.

PERRY It's like a rock.

Duncan squeezes the arm. Still holding his cigarette, Perry jumps up and grabs Duncan.

PERRY You're going in.

Duncan protests, laughing as Perry wrestles him to the edge. Perry jumps in, holding him. They don't come up. Duncan bursts through the surface choking and gasping for air.

DUNCAN You're crazy! You almost killed me!

Scared and angry, Duncan swims quickly to shore. Perry laughs a bit, stops, treads water, then drops below the surface.

EXT. TRAIN TRESTLE – LATER
Perry stands on the shore and calls up into the trestle.

PERRY I said I was sorry.

No answer.

INT. TRAIN TRESTLE – SAME
Perry hoists himself up into the trestle. Duncan's wet clothes hang drying from rusty metal support beams. Duncan crouches in his briefs amidst the crisscross of beams. He won't look at Perry climbing toward him.

PERRY I was just goofin' around. Sorry.

Duncan shrugs his shoulders. Perry stands facing Duncan, holding onto one of the rafters. He looks at Duncan's stomach. Small, round scars dot Duncan's belly. He points.

PERRY What happened to your stomach?

Duncan looks up and answers as if the scars are medals.

DUNCAN Cigarette burns. You wanna touch 'em?

He looks at Perry, waiting for a reaction. Perry meets his gaze for just a moment. He reaches out and fingers one of his burns, then stands up.

PERRY Do they hurt?

Duncan shakes his head "No." A train whistles in the distance. Perry looks behind him toward the sound.

PERRY Train's comin'.

Duncan looks straight ahead. He stares for a moment. His hand hesitantly unclenches from his knee, then slowly

travels toward Perry. Perry whips around. He looks at Duncan, then looks to see that they are alone. Duncan looks up at him. The train rumbles closer. Perry closes his eyes as he lets Duncan touch him. Duncan's eyes are open. He looks up at Perry and continues to touch him as the train passes overhead.

EXT. CHICKEN COOP – DAY

Duncan's bike is propped up against the coop. The chicken sits alone in her basket on the handlebars. Duncan walks over to her carrying a sickle, which he rests against the coop.

DUNCAN There you are.

He picks her out of the basket and carries her toward the fence of the coop, talking to her as he walks.

DUNCAN I'm sorry. You can't ride with me anymore.

He perches her on the fence post. His father drives a tractor in the distance.

DUNCAN It looks weird.

The chicken jumps off the post and runs off. He follows her. She sits in the basket again. Duncan laughs softly at her.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD – DAY

Duncan rides his bike in the middle of the road, chicken perched in her basket. He is smiling. Behind him in the distance, the orange truck approaches. He doesn't hear it. It pulls up alongside him.

BRENT Hey, Chicken Boy. We been looking for you. *(Pause)* We're headin' up to the quarry. Hop in.

Duncan keeps riding, looking straight ahead.

BRENT Ah, come on, man.

Duncan stops his bike defiantly. The truck stops.

DUNCAN No thanks.

Brent gets out of the truck. He takes hold of Duncan's bike.

BRENT Come on. We'll throw your bike in back.

The driver is too nice. Duncan is suspicious. Tina stands up in the back of the truck.

TINA I wanna sit up front. My hair's gettin' all tangled.

She attempts to de-snarl her long, brassy hair with a large pink comb with a handle. Duncan looks in the back of the truck. Missy and a shirtless Travis nuzzle each other by the tailgate. Missy looks up and speaks in a teasing, sexy tone.

MISSY Hi, Duncan.

Duncan responds, embarrassed.

DUNCAN Hi.

Perry sits by the cab, his back to Duncan. He turns uncomfortably to look and, seeing Duncan, gives him a dismissive, halfhearted wave.

PERRY What's up?

Duncan breaks into a smile.

DUNCAN Okay. I'll come.

Duncan takes his chicken and gets off his bike. Perry hides his nervousness.

PERRY If he doesn't want to go, he doesn't have to go.

Travis lets down the tailgate. Brent hands him Duncan's bike.

DUNCAN I want to.

BRENT He wants to.

Duncan and the chicken get in.

DUNCAN I like your truck.

BRENT Hey, thanks, man.

TINA Whoa! Hold on a minute.

Duncan stops and looks at her. Tina feathers her bangs as she speaks.

TINA I am not ridin' back here with some faggot bird.

Duncan whips around. Brent smiles. Perry shifts uncomfortably.

DUNCAN Can't she sit up front?

Darren yells from the front of the truck.

DARREN She ain't sittin' up here!

Tina leans into Darren's window and starts to hit him with her comb.

TINA You don't got any manners, Darren!

Missy teases Tina.

MISSY Let the chicken ride up front.

Tina continues to hit Darren. He laughs as he fights her off and yells into the back.

DARREN Get rid of the goddam thing.

DUNCAN I can't just leave her.

The chicken is restless.

DUNCAN Shh. Shh. It's okay.

Travis joins in, laughing.

TRAVIS Break its neck!

Missy hits Travis playfully in response to his remark. The rest laugh at the proposition. Tina screams. They all look.

TINA *(Sweetly)* Brent? I dropped my comb.

Brent moves to the side, picks up the comb, wipes it on his shirt, then slicks his own hair back with it. He hands Tina the comb and winks at her.

TINA *(Smiling at him)* Thank you.

She gives Darren one last hard whack.

TINA Queerbait!

Darren rolls up the window and locks the door. Perry takes out a cigarette. Brent walks to the back of the truck.

BRENT Perry here thinks you look like a queer riding around with your little birdie.

Duncan looks to Perry. Perry tries to light his cigarette with Duncan's lighter. It doesn't work. He won't look at Duncan, but glares at Brent as he flicks the lighter. It won't light.

DUNCAN I'm not queer.

Duncan holds the chicken protectively up to his chest and strokes her. Brent turns from Perry to Duncan and slams the tailgate. He speaks with a cold, casual tone.

BRENT Break the frickin' bird's neck and let's go.

Brent winks at Travis. Duncan responds in disbelief.

DUNCAN I don't want to.

Travis, his arm around Missy, looks at Brent and joins in.

TRAVIS Come on, faggot.

The chicken flaps her wings wildly. Duncan speaks to her sternly.

DUNCAN Settle down.

Missy notices the shift in mood and speaks to Travis.

MISSY Let's go.

Tina sits down. Darren watches from the front. Travis ignores Missy's plea, laughing.

TRAVIS Kill it, Duncan!

The chicken keeps moving. Duncan holds the bird with both hands and brings her to his face. He yells at her, near tears.

DUNCAN Stop it!

Brent and Travis laugh. Perry doesn't. He continues flicking the lighter. Travis makes chicken noises. Darren joins him. Duncan puts the bird in his mouth and closes his eyes, trying to block them out. They stop laughing. Darren continues squawking. Then seeing them silent, he presses himself against the back window, craning his neck, trying to look at Duncan.

DARREN What's he doin'? What's he doin'?

TINA He is such a weirdo! You shoulda seen him in church. Right, Missy?

Missy looks down, ashamed. Perry looks uncomfortably from Duncan to the boys. He wants out.

PERRY *(To Tina)* Leave him alone.

He swears at the lighter, shaking it. Brent focuses his aggression on Perry.

BRENT *(Angrily)* What, are you stickin' up for your boyfriend?

More laughter.

TINA/TRAVIS Ooh, Perry.

Duncan opens his eyes and looks at the boys and at Perry. Perry gives up on the lighter and swearing again, tosses it at Duncan's bike.

Duncan bites down hard.

A small stream of blood splatters across Tina's cheek and onto her hair. Tina touches her face and looks at the blood on her hand.

Missy screams. The boys stop laughing.

Duncan rips the bird's body from his mouth. Its wings flap violently.

Perry closes his eyes and throws his head back against the cab.

Duncan tosses the chicken out of the truck.

Silence.

Tina pushes herself away from Duncan and scrambles out of the truck. She bangs on Darren's window and pulls on the door handle.

Travis looks at Duncan and looks away fumbling, trying to put on his T-shirt. Missy sobs into the corner of the truck.

Duncan looks at Brent. Brent chews dazedly but violently at his pinky nail, then walks to the driver's side and gets in.

Duncan slumps down in the truck and looks at Perry. Perry nervously holds his gaze. Duncan spits the bird head into his hand. Perry looks away and searches his pockets. Finding a pack of matches, he lights the cigarette, takes a drag, then holds it out for Duncan. Still holding the chicken's head, Duncan wipes his mouth on the back of his hand and takes the cigarette, not looking at Perry. He stares straight ahead, smoking, as they drive away.

Fish Belly White
22 minutes
Written and Directed by Michael Burke
PRINCIPAL CAST:
Duncan: *Mickey Smith*
Perry: *Jason Hayes*
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Writing

Fish Belly White

Michael Burke grew up in the small town of Chittenden, Vermont. After attending the University of Vermont at Burlington and Castleton State College, he completed the graduate film program at NYU in the spring of 1999. *Fish Belly White* has received awards at numerous festivals, including the Special Jury Prize at the 1999 Sundance Film Festival.

Shot in rural Vermont, the film has a spareness of style, both visually and verbally, that reflects its locale. "There's minimal dialogue because I was drawing from old-time Vermont where people don't really talk a lot," explains Burke. "Vermonters are very practical and pragmatic, you speak when you need to."

Early in the film, Duncan, a young boy in a rural farming community, calms his pet chicken by putting its head into his mouth. The image is shocking and oddly serene, and draws the audience into the story. "It didn't actually start with a chicken," says Burke. "It started with the character. When I wrote the chicken into the script, I called my brother, who co-produced, and said, you have to get me a chicken. So I raised her in my apartment in Brooklyn. And as we did video exercises with the chicken, I asked the actor to put the chicken in his mouth and I realized what a striking image that was."

Duncan's behavior—his close relationship to his pet chicken, an afternoon's interlude with another boy on a train trestle—leads some viewers to read the film as an allegory about sexual difference. "I wanted to leave it open-ended," explains Burke. "For me, it's that he's dying to make a connection with someone. It's more about the connection for me than his sexuality. What I discovered in writing this is that I don't know that he's gay. I was really battling with that, and I'm not sure. And I discovered that was okay for me."

Pressed for further explanation of the film's meaning, Burke responds, "I'm being intentionally a little bit vague, because I think that's what's working for the film—that people get to actively participate, they get to think about it. When people ask 'what do you mean by that?' I'm really more curious as to what they got from it. Always. Because that's all there is anyhow. It doesn't matter anymore what I was trying to do, it's either there or it's not." —*Mark Olsen*

Stewart Stern

Continued from page 61

That came from Frank Mazzola, who played Crunch or Goon. He was head of the real gang at Hollywood High, and he became my technical advisor. He gave me a list of things gang kids said. "Hang loose" and all those things weren't in my vocabulary.

But those phrases have a sensibility of not so much of realism, but of jazz. So you don't really think you'd overhear gang kids talking that way, but you do get the sense that they're riffing the way jazz musicians do.

That's a wonderful allusion.

Now there was a sequence you wrote about Jim Stark having a fantasy that he's shooting ducks, and balloons blow up and become his parents, and then deflate and he tries to fix them. What happened to that?

Nick was worried about the width of the Cinemascope screen. He didn't know if he could fill it with present action, and he said, wouldn't it be interesting to do two things at once. To show the actual action, and also the hidden stream of consciousness that fed it. He said that I should try something simultaneous. For instance, in the scene at the police station with Jimmy and his parents—as the hubbub amongst them gets crazier—why not show, on the other side of the screen, like the vision in a cartoon, all that is happening in Jimmy's head? On one side of the screen the action would freeze, while on the other, the fantasy would come to life. But I felt it was really presumptuous, no one can visualize what another person's dream is. I wrote about six of those scenes. I still have them.

Nick Ray went on to make a movie where he had six multiple images all going on at once on the same screen—You Can't Go Home Again *[1973], that he made with his students. So he did that idea, in a more experimental way.*

I think it would have stopped this film, it would have stopped the emotion of that scene for sure. I hated the idea, once I tried to do it, because it was hardware, it was a set, it was balloons. I hated the dream in *Spellbound*, that long strange sequence of Dalí's. It made it too solid and tangible.

There are secondary characters that have names like "Sergeant" and "Officer," but even the parents are just called "Father," "Mother." You were telling me that someone was offended that the character "Negro Woman" didn't have a name?

I gave a talk about a year ago at a high school, and it was interesting because when I asked them, "Is there anything in this screenplay that bothers anybody, anything that's not true, is any of it phony?," a black person raised her hand and said, "Why is there Jim Stark and Buzz and Judy and a 'Negro Woman.'" And that really got me. I said, if I were writing it today, I don't think I would do that. But I think I would only not do that because being nameless separates her, it's just wrong.

She understood that Plato was doomed. Is the Sal Mineo character, Plato, the true rebel, or outsider?

If being yourself is rebellion, which is what they were trying to be, they were rebels in the eyes of their parents. It's just a curious, convenient coincidence that they chose that title, "Rebel Without a Cause," because when you put it on this script, what it is really saying is that all these parents think there's no reason to rebel, given the home the kids come from; there's no reason in God's world for them to be discontented. So they have no cause. But I think it's supposed to reflect what the parents' idea is, or what the American audience's idea is. These kids who have always been nice go out and shoot up a school in Colorado. We all ask: Why? But it's specifically the adult view of it, not the Jimmy, Buzz, Judy, Plato view of it. They know why even if the why is sometimes insane. So it has an ironic sense that was not intended, which was that they wanted to call anything "Rebel Without a Cause" that had to do with young people because it was a good title and they owned it.

The character Jim Stark had a big effect on kids his age seeing that movie. And yet with all these new teen movies, no mythic characters rise out of them. There are no new Jim Starks.

There are Leonardo DiCaprios. But it's hard to separate Jim Stark from Jim Dean. With DiCaprio, it's happening when he's too young. If he had the maturity to understand how important he is in terms of people's psyches, and that he could be a model for emotional growth, he might align himself with a creative team that can make films that would really speak for kids, and let them feel understood. Mythic heroes come from the people who embody more than the roles.

Were you involved when the Motion Picture Code asked for changes in the script?

They did?

For instance, instead of saying "no killing" when the boys established the rules for the knife fight, Buzz had to say "no sticking." They cut swear words, they took out the cupped hand holding a cigarette —they thought it would be seen as reefer. They were worried about the incest tinge to Judy and her father, and the homosexual tinge to Plato and Jim. When Judy and Jim came out of the mansion, they didn't want Judy looking mussed at all, as if the petting had gotten heavy.

That's right. But I don't remember writing "killing," either.

Even though they carefully blacked out certain things and altered words, there is still an ambiguous sexuality between Judy and her father, and there is still a tinge, possibly, that Plato's hero worship is the beginning of a gay consciousness. In hindsight, do you wish you had made more of that?

I kind of do. If I were doing it today, I think I would want to make Plato think he was gay, and deal with that relationship. Jim Stark was not that way. But one of the reasons Plato was an outsider in that school was because people called him fag. It would have been a greater stretch for the Jim Stark character—who needs peer approval as badly as Plato does, badly enough to go to a chickie run—to be in defiance of the group. To say, "Fuck you,

this relationship is my business, I know I'm not gay. Maybe he is. You shit on him, I'm protecting him." From that point of view, it could have value. A story like that could have value now.

Your script carefully plans every shot. You introduce the school with the tires of bikes coming into the racks, the school door being slapped by hand after hand as it's knocked open. Little details that may or may not have ended up in the film. I don't think many scripts today take that kind of care with every shot.

We're taught in film school now not to do that, that that's the director's province. But you talk to directors, especially directors from the theater, they want the author's vision detailed in every possible way. I had Karl Malden and Norman Lloyd come to my class at USC because my students were being told by other teachers not to indicate how the actor should do something as the character, that that's the actor's problem. I asked those actors to come talk about what they look for in the script. And they said, we are hungry for everything, anything that shows us what the writer sees in his mind or in his heart about how a character behaves.

You wrote Rebel *fairly quickly, didn't you?*

It was about 12 weeks. I began New Year's Day, and I wrote right up to the 25th of March. This one *[opens bound script]* Natalie Wood signed, and I didn't know it. She came to dinner one night and left the table, and I didn't find out until we moved up here to Seattle that she had pulled this out and written on it. Here, read it.

"Stewart, Thank you for giving me my beginning. Natalie Wood." Sweet.

Very sweet.

(Stewart Stern was interviewed by Annie Nocenti in his home in Seattle.)

Alexander Payne & Jim Taylor

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You also used different footage when McAllister goes to New York. There's all that grainy pickup footage.

Payne: That's stock footage. I just like old film stuff. I like rear-screen projection, and it's fun to get the tapes of the plates, from stock houses. They have things which are shot just for rear-screen projection. There are guys who, to make a buck, stick their camera on the back of their car and just drive. They sell it to stock footage houses. And it sits and languishes there for decades, used or unused, and I love watching that stuff.

The Tammy/Lisa relationship is very poignant.

Payne: A lesbian friend of mine said, how did you get it right? It reminded me so much of me of when I was that age trying to figure it out.

Lisa had an authentic moment with Tammy, but she ran from it to the big heterosexual, the football guy.

Payne: For me, Lisa's just sort of fucked up, and her sexuality is like Russell Stover candies. My mom always takes a bite of one and puts the rest back. Let me see what this one's like. First Lisa likes a woman, then she likes a man, then she likes a black guy—she's going to try everything.

I wanted to ask you about the process of working together. I read that you have two keyboards linked to one computer. You work on scenes together, talk and type at the same time?

Taylor: Yeah, pretty much. We hardly write anything where we're not in the same room.

Payne: Every once in a while, Jim or I will say, let me just have a half hour. Because every once in a while you have to be in a writer's place, silent, and just write and not have to say it first and explain it or justify it. But 98% of the time, it's together.

And the process of getting Election *financed?*

Payne: It was supposedly pre-financed, because we were hired by a studio to adapt it together and for me to direct. But it's funny, we had to go through some of the same hurdles as if we were looking for original financing. Putting the right cast together, and just making it seem even more appealing to the financier, in this case the studio. Even though they already owned it, there were still hurdles to jump through.

And what was the budget on this?

Payne: It started out at about $8 million or $8.5, but ended up at about $9 million. Although, you never really know the budget, because they don't tell you. And then my post-production went a long time and I really don't know how much the additional photography for the new ending cost. On *Citizen Ruth* I never really knew. Maybe $4-4.5 million.

Was Reese Witherspoon your first choice?

Payne: After I met her she was. I still met some more actors after I met her, just to have met everyone who was around. But there was really no one else.

And Matthew Broderick?

Payne: He was the first one that the studio and I really agreed on that we should pursue. You know, you have to go through the huge mega-stars first, the studios always force you to. But very soon after that, it was Matthew Broderick.

And your idea for the rest of the cast? Were you looking for a particular kind of face, a Nebraska face?

Payne: Just real people. Just people who were people, and not actors trying to be people. A lot of them came from Omaha.

And what are you guys going to do next?

Taylor: We have to talk about that. Because I've been working on this script for a while, while Alexander was cutting *Election*. I don't like writing alone, but I'm getting more excited about the possibility of making the film. But just the writing process itself, of writing on my own, is very unpleasant and unproductive, and it's just no fun. So we've talked about some other things and in

fact we have some deals pending, but we'd like to write on spec.

Payne: That's the only way to do it.

Taylor: This movie definitely put us in a different place, both Alexander as a director and us as a writing team, and even me thinking about doing stuff to direct. So we have to decide what we want to be both individually and together. It's interesting because we really like working together.

Payne It's one of the most joyous parts of the process.

Taylor So it's sort of a *de facto* partnership. It's not like we set out to form a company.

Payne I have some opportunities, but I'm finding that I'm really only interested in stuff that I or we write. I'm reading scripts that other people write, but I have a hard time falling in love. I think when you're a director and you're reading a script, thinking if you want to make it, you look for certain moments. There are some scenes that are just workaday scenes, but then you get to this moment, and you think, oh, it would be great to do that. I'm lucky to see, in a script that I haven't written, three of those moments, five maybe. The two scripts that we've written, each of them has 50 moments that I couldn't wait to do.

Reading the novel, you saw there were potential moments?

Payne Potential, and then we came up with more, which is what we do. It's really about treating all of it like writing. Which means really looking inside of yourself and pulling it out. I mean, the whole thing comes from the writing. And then directing is another form of writing, and editing is certainly another form of writing. Actually, there are very few movies I look at these days and say, wow, I wish I had directed that. I wish I had had that script. Almost none, ever. Except *Unforgiven*. That was a good one.

[Both laugh]

(Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor were interviewed by Annie Nocenti at their office in Los Angeles.)

Evan Hunter

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even know that and I was working with them *[laughs]*. And it seemed so fake, the whistle and her appreciation of the whistle seemed so unsophisticated to me. A woman like that—

—wouldn't even turn her head.

A funny-looking girl might say, tee-hee, a guy whistled at me. But why would *she* do that? She'd march right by. Like a construction worker saying, hey, mama. *[makes kissing sound]* You'd march right by! I do, if I'm a girl.

[laughs] *If you're a girl?*

When I'm writing girls, they march right by, my girls march right by! But I had no idea that was a reference to a commercial.

That's a piece of research I found. How true it is, I don't know. Now, the du Maurier short story had a grumpy old farm couple, you turned them into sophisticates.

We knew that from the start, and we knew we weren't going to shoot in England. And Hitch had luck with *Shadow of a Doubt [released in 1943]*, he liked shooting up there, and he wanted to go back there. There was a lot of superstition involved. He had luck with Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca [1940]* was his first big hit in America, and this was another Daphne du Maurier story. The setting dictated that the person had to come from someplace else and go there, because, who the hell would *be* there?

And you'd get the "stranger comes to town" tension. You added in the schoolteacher?

Annie, yeah. One of the thoughts that got shot down was that Melanie would be the new teacher, hired by the townspeople. She comes to town and the birds attack. The narrow-minded townspeople link her arrival with the onset of the attacks. We felt we could have had a love affair there, too, but I guess it was too unsophisticated with a schoolmarm. You saw how Hitch felt about schoolmarms. He gave her the housedress and wedgies! *[laughs]* Imagine if that was his lead character! If we had really been honest, she would have been a real '60s San Francisco girl, instead of this sophisticated glamourpuss.

Did you discuss the concept that something was wrong with the town to deserve the bird attacks? That the town had a secret?

I never thought about that. It was more like *An Enemy of the People*, or something like that. The water supply being contaminated. When we were first discussing the possibility of her going up there to investigate these bird attacks, maybe it came up. I'm sure it would have come up because it's coming up now. Is there something the townspeople are trying to hide?

There were a couple of news items you and Hitchcock had seen about actual bird attacks, but did you worry that it would seem like an illogical, improbable thing?

I never for a minute thought that this couldn't happen. The actual news stories were really isolated incidents of bird attacks, how they got lost or something, there was never any question of malice behind the various attacks, they were just large masses of birds who drifted in. The scene that was cut, between Mitch and Melanie, did a lot toward helping that notion along, the possible reasons for the attacks, that we are mistreating birds, and they're rising up at last.

Did Hitchcock choose you because you had written a respected novel? Because he was trying to get a more serious reputation?

I'm not sure *The Blackboard Jungle* was perceived in New York as the great American novel. But I think Hitch also knew I wrote suspense novels, the Ed McBain mysteries. I think he knew that I was innovative, because I had done *Appointment at Eleven* for *Hitchcock Presents*. So he knew I could open a story up, and this story certainly needed opening up. *[laughs]* There were many things that came into play. To this day, New York writers have a certain cachet, whether it is perceived or real. It's changing a lot now

because there are a lot of Hollywood writers who are doing very good stuff, and who are losing the image of the hack writer. But back then, you'd go to New York if you didn't want a hack job.

About Ed McBain—to have two names and two careers, that's just fascinating to me. How does that feel, to have two identities?

It feels great! I'm very successful as Ed McBain. I just got the Diamond Dagger Award in London from the British Crime Writers Association. When I started the mystery series, the publisher warned that if it became known I was writing mysteries, it would diminish my credibility as a serious novelist. So I chose a pseudonym. And it was a real secret, for six or seven novels, that Evan Hunter was Ed McBain, but then we got such wonderful reviews.

I just read Nocturne. *There's a running gag about the cops in it wondering whether or not Hitchcock wrote* The Birds.

I use that joke in a lot of the books, because that's the image that Hitch tried to create, that his movies just sprang out of his head. As he said so often, once he had the storyboard and the screenplay, he didn't have to shoot the movie. As if that was the major part of his contribution, which it wasn't. It was the screenwriter's work, and good screenwriters, too. But yeah, I use that joke a lot.

You were on the set of The Birds, *because of* Marnie*? You and Hitchcock split on that film?*

I was on the set by accident. Twice. Once in L.A. and once in Bodega Bay. Because writing *Marnie* was an ongoing thing. It's a complicated script that I had come up with. There's a thing called screen memory in psychiatry, and it's not a screen you project things on but a screen that hides something. When a psychiatrist is working with a patient, the patient will very often experience what seems like a breakthrough. They will find the trauma that caused them to become a pickpocket or whatever, but it's a screen memory, it's just a memory that's being thrown up to hide the real, awful trauma. I had Marnie have a breakthrough, but it's a double suspense thing because she breaks through, but it's not it, and then finally she breaks into the real horror of what happened. It was really good. Somebody told me Hitchcock used a lot of my script in the film, but I don't know, I only saw it once. He may not have wanted to do that whole psychological bit again with *Marnie* because he did it in *Spellbound [1945]*.

Why did you make Mitch a lawyer and give Melanie that dialogue about him wanting to lock people up, put them in cages?

It seemed more interesting than his being just a businessman. We didn't want to make him a creative type. He had to be somebody at opposite sides of the spectrum from Melanie. There's a staid law-and-order demeanor about him, the guy who doesn't like people who break the law, doesn't like people who go swimming naked. The old generation opposed to the new. A representative of law and order at a time when kids seemed to be breaking all the laws about sex, about dope, about everything. And here the birds come, breaking the natural order of things.

You wonder about Mitch. Why is he so dominated by his mother? You could almost read the whole movie as the birds being Lydia's attempt to get rid of Melanie, or the birds being an attempt by Mitch to throw all these women out of his life. The birds serve a purpose for each character.

That's good, you know. I think if Hitch had let it alone, let that kind of insight be enough instead of trying to push things onto the characters, he would have got the respectability he was looking for, because people would have been talking about it—does this mean this, does this mean that? And very often, that's the best thing—if you're going for one thing and the other reading is subliminal, that's fine.

Now, about the soundtrack—the way the sound cuts out is fascinating. And the lack of music—

We had some lively discussions about music and no music. And I was all for music because I felt that it would help the comedy in the beginning if there were a lighthearted score, that it would encourage the audience to think this was supposed to be funny. The scene in the car with the birds swaying, to music, could have been a lighthearted trip. And so could the scene in the elevator with the guy looking at the birds, instead of the empty space that's there now. And I think that music themes throughout would have helped the bird attacks. I was on a television show where they were interviewing me, and they showed a clip from *The Birds,* and it had some symphonic score, like *Night on Bald Mountain* or something, and it was a bird attack, and it had music behind it! I said, wow, look, there it is, there it is with music! I think music would have scared them when we wanted them to be scared, or cued them to laugh when we wanted to be funny. Even just the trip across the bay, in the rowboat, before the first bird attack, before the bird hits her on the head, if music had been in that scene, building it from lighthearted, changing to darker and darker until suddenly BOOM! on the head—

Using the soundtrack to reinforce your intent that the light comedic aspects led people down the garden path to terror.

And if Hitch wanted to go with the concept of later having it just bird noises, then the lack of music would have become more ominous. It would have been as if the birds had taken over, and there's no more music, folks. Now all you get to hear are bird sounds—that's the music I'm giving you now.

So the birds would take over the soundtrack, rather than filling in emptiness. The birds would be taking over culture.

Exactly. They would be getting rid of what is human and cultural and replacing it with their animal shrieks. It would have been an interesting way to go, from a lighthearted score, to a more menacing score, to a bird score, a score of bird noises.

Which would fit with what you mentioned before, about the musical crescendo equivalent of a scene being a bird attack. In terms of your earlier film work, it's interesting that Strangers When We Meet *has a Hitchcockian woman in it.*

The Kim Novak character? Maggie.

Yes. The Kirk Douglas character has an almost fetishistic obsession with her, he kind of stalks her. And she was unreadable, in the way the woman in Vertigo *was.*

That's interesting. When Kim Novak read the first draft of the script, she asked me to come over, she wanted to discuss it. She said, you know, the scene where we come into the motel room, and we see a bra over the chair, and then the trail of clothing to the bed, and they're in the bed together—well, everybody knows I don't wear a bra. So I said, well, I didn't know that, but in any case, Kim, this isn't you. This is Maggie, in the film, and she does wear a bra. And she said, yes, but you don't understand, everybody knows that I don't wear a bra. I said, well, what would you like me to do? And she said, I would like you to remove that bra from the chair. I said, consider it removed. *[laughs]*

[Laughs] The Birds *came out right after all the '50s post-atomic mutant horror movies. Was that type of horror treatment something that you talked about avoiding?*

I think *Godzilla* was around, wasn't it? What we wanted to do wasn't a horror film. We discussed how much we should explain, because we could have made it any one of a number of things. That the birds were hungry, that there was a drought or something and they were attacking because they needed some other kind of food. Or we could have had a radioactive thing that came from Los Alamos, but then it would have been science fiction, and we didn't want that. We wanted it to seem as if birds were attacking people for reasons we could not understand. That's all. And if Hitch could do the job right and convince people that these were really birds and they were really attacking people, and we were seeing it with our eyes, how could we not believe it? We *see* birds attacking people! They're doing it, why do we have to explain *why* they're doing it!

Was he happy with the film in the end?

I don't think he was happy with the reception he got. I remember when we went together to see it at the Museum of Modern Art screening, it was not the kind of enthusiastic applause you get at the end of a really good film. It was polite applause, and stunned silence by the end of it. They didn't know what they were supposed to feel. Also, they were in those austere surroundings, those hallowed halls. Again, they didn't have the cues, the music cues.

Truffaut and Peter Bogdanovich and others at the time were saying: take this genre, the thriller genre, seriously, take Hitchcock seriously. A critical appreciation campaign was being mounted that the public hadn't really caught up with yet.

But you see, I always thought his films were serious. I didn't just think of them as genre films. I thought they were very serious, and they were entertaining as well. So to me, he had already achieved what he was trying to achieve. He had already achieved it! I thought *Lifeboat* was a very serious film. I thought *North by Northwest* was a very serious film. It wasn't just junk! It was good!

His films often resonate with something serious, be it the cold war, some psychological trend, or Rope *with its Nietzschean philosophy. So in a sense, you're saying he jumped the gun with his need to be seen as an artist?*

I think he would be enormously pleased with what's happening now. What they're giving him on his 100th birthday.

Had you discussed any projects with him past Marnie*?*

One night we had dinner together, and he said he wanted to do a movie set backstage every place you go. So if it were in the theater, it would literally be backstage, not the audience out front or the people on stage—backstage. In the Empire State Building, you're not on the roof, you're in the basement. A luxury liner, you're in the boiler room. And it's still a wonderful movie idea. It would have made a good movie. He said this to me at dinner one night after *Marnie* had opened. And he said, maybe you'll write the screenplay for me. But that was just dinner conversation.

(Evan Hunter was interviewed by Annie Nocenti in his home in New York City.)

Molly Haskell

Continued from page 9

conquests that paper over the anguish of growing up. For filmmakers journeying backward in time, there are conflicting forces at work: the tension between the now-obligatory grossness of the teenflick and the backlash against it; the liberating effects of bathroom humor in a p.c. environment versus the puritanical, conformist context which finds broad bathroom and sexual humor funny.

The lure of regression combined with the profits in doing so make it depressingly easy for Hollywood to indulge in the crudest sort of pandering. There has come to be an almost uncanny inverse ratio between reviews and boxoffice stats: the better the review (i.e., the more adult-friendly the film), the fewer the kids lining up for that all-important opening weekend; while a rush to the theater will predictably coincide with pans of a film for being incoherent, vulgar, childish (see, most recently, *Wild Wild West*, and the Adam Sandler pee-fest).

In other words, what repels Daddy and shocks Mommy still drives the motor of the teen film and its audience. Yet for all the gravity-like pull of lowest-common-denominator thinking, a remarkable number of interesting and exceptional movies continue to emerge, ones that understand that beneath the bravado and posturing is a deep-down vulnerability.

Movies and moviemakers, with good acting and scripts, will always find a way to excite us, to portray a milieu accurately and wrest insight from the most unpromising material. The trick for us moviegoers is not to become so demoralized by the sludge that we'll swear off the whole genre and miss the gems when they appear.

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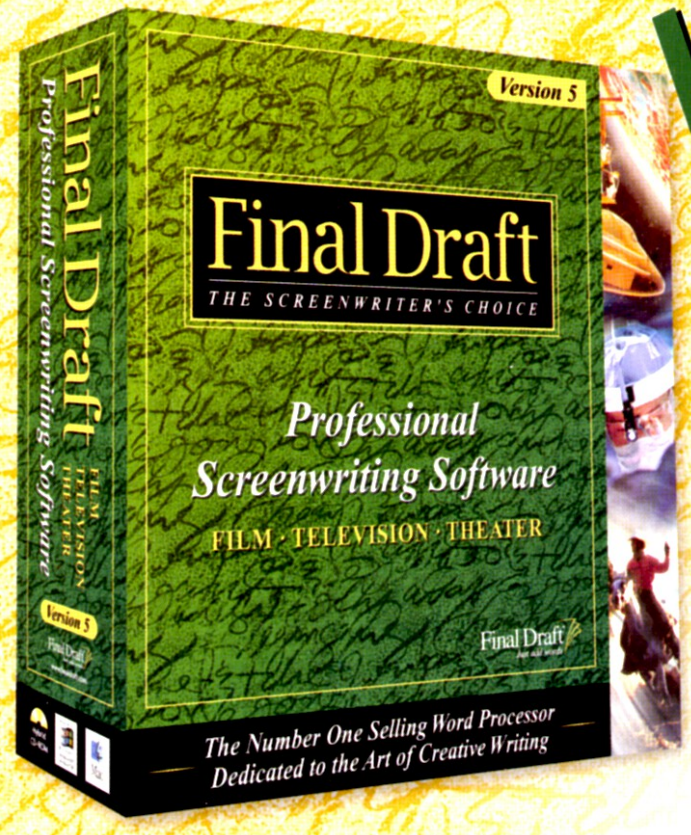

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